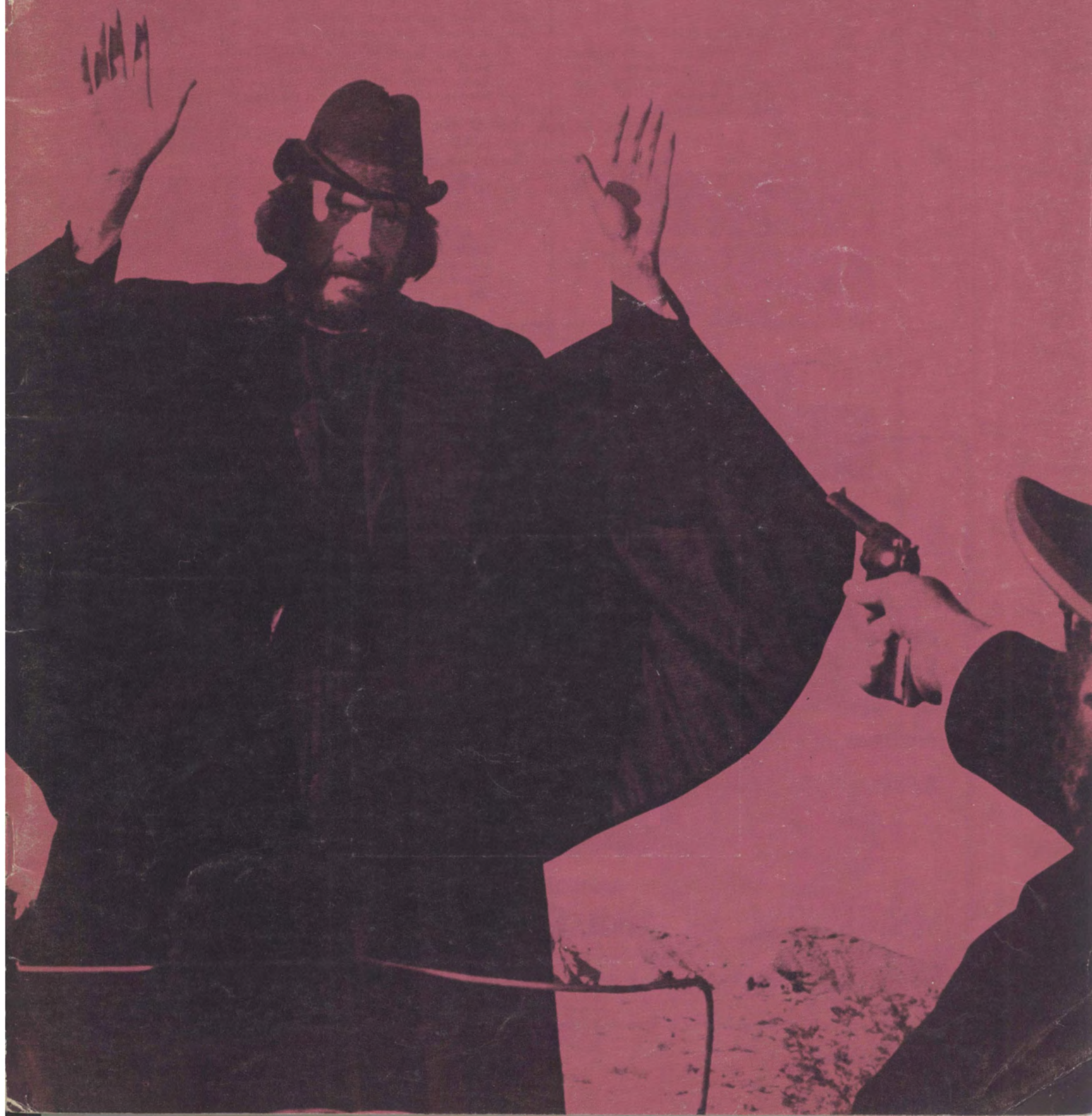


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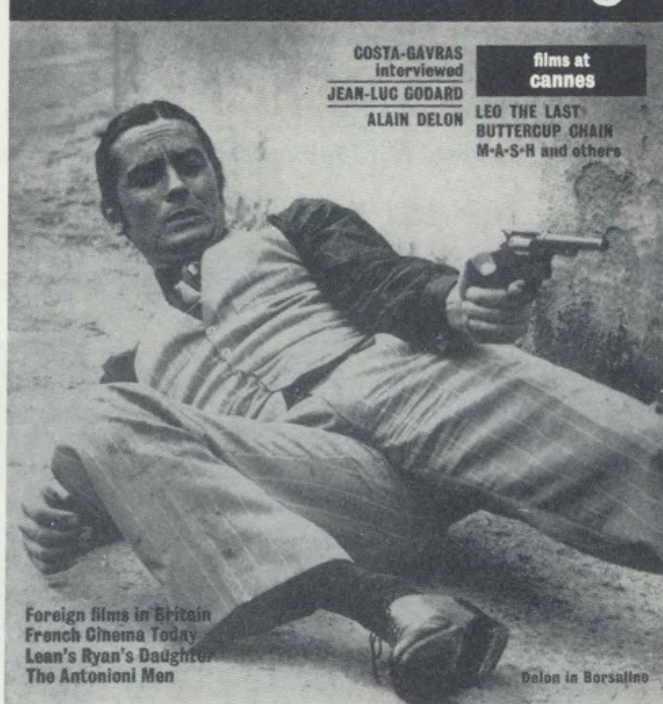
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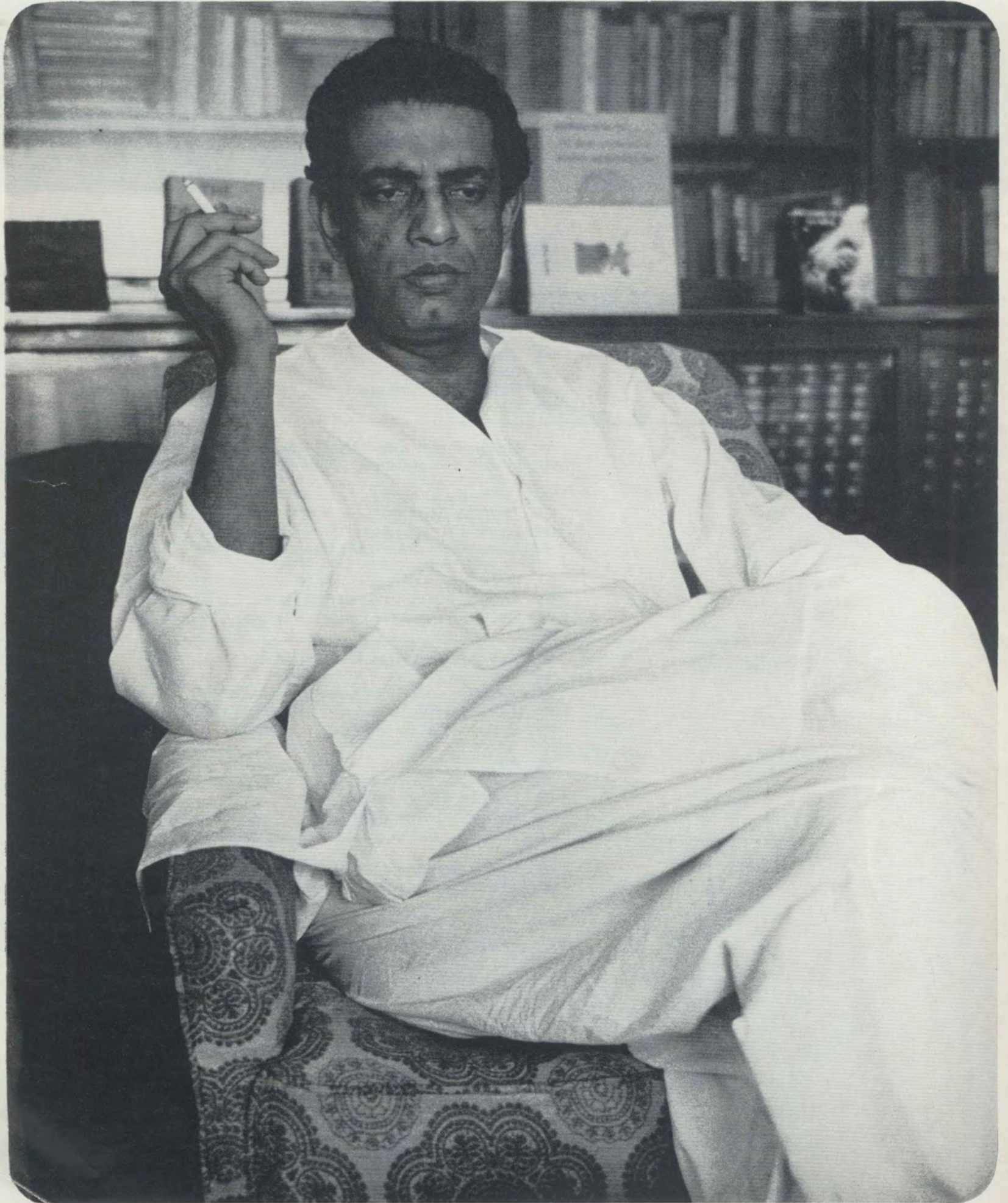
Editor: Penelope Houston Associate: Tom Milne  
Designer: John Harmer Business Manager: John Smoker

SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy; signed articles represent the views of their authors, and not necessarily those of the Editorial Board.

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# Conversation with Satyajit Ray

Folke Isaksson



**F**OLKE ISAKSSON: *I think most great artists have one thing in common: childhood, and what happened in childhood, has meant a lot to them. Could you tell me something about your own starting point and background?*

SATYAJIT RAY: I don't think I really began to function as an artist until after I left the University of Calcutta. I had honours in economics. Then I spent two and a half years in Santiniketan, Tagore's university, and I consider those my most important formative years. I was studying painting, and this was the time when I had most leisure for contemplation, reading, looking at nature and getting to know people. Everything started from that point onwards, my interest in films, etc. I had a strange kind of childhood. My father died when I was only two years old. We had a big place in North Calcutta: there was a big printing-press in the house, and a block-making establishment and book publishing, but everything went just completely phut.

*There is something of this, I presume, in CHARULATA?*

Well, it was already there in the Tagore original, but since I had this peculiar background I was able to reproduce it. I was about six when we had to leave the place because the business went into liquidation, and my mother and I were stranded. We came to a maternal uncle's house, and he gave us shelter.

*Was your family related to Tagore's?*

Not related. My father knew him very well, my grandfather was a close friend. They were about of the same age. And it was Tagore himself who wanted me to spend some time at his university. I wasn't particularly keen to leave Calcutta: I was too much of a city person, and Santiniketan was like a village, miles from nowhere. But then I found it did me a tremendous amount of good. The professors I studied under were great artists: not just painters, but really people with vision, with understanding, with deep insight.

*Was Tagore a kind of mentor for you then?*

No, I couldn't say that. With Tagore one had very little direct contact in Santiniketan. But certainly the other people who taught me were mentors in a way, and everything has gone into my films, I think. Everything I learnt there, nothing directly about films, but about art in general. I read a tremendous lot. There was a good library, and I was reading not only about painting but about everything else... novels, Indian literature, Western literature, everything...

*The Bengal cultural renaissance, which started about a century ago, has presumably meant a great deal to you.*

It certainly seems to me a very significant period, although it doesn't to some of the younger generation now. I don't know, though, whether I feel part of a tradition; I've never consciously analysed that myself. I hope it shows in my work, whatever I feel.

*Were there any politics in your home?*

Not very much; not in my uncle's house. Music was very much in the air; it was all my aunts and uncles, they all used to sing. But it was essentially a non-intellectual family, and I didn't develop as an artist there.

*What were you doing just before the War?*

I was in Santiniketan then. I left the day the Japanese bombed Calcutta; I heard the news on the radio and felt I was much too cut off from events. I wanted to be in Calcutta, my mother was here. I left in the middle of my studies because I knew that I would go in for commercial art, not fine arts, which I was studying there.

*And you had to go to commercial art for financial reasons?*

No, I was very interested in graphic design, because along with my fine arts studies I was reading books on graphics, book production, typography. I came back in December, 1942, and in 1943 I was doing a job with a British agency. I joined as a kind of junior visualiser, a layout man, and I became art director in about five, six days.

*I would like to know what Partition meant to you.*

Well, I consider that my life was not directly affected, because although my original home is supposed to be in East Pakistan, where my grandfather was born and my father lived for some time, I never lived there myself. I've always felt that I belonged to Calcutta and West Bengal, except in a certain cultural sort of

way, because I knew the culture of East Pakistan, the folk songs and stories. What really affected me and other people here in Calcutta was the spectacle of refugees, the refugees in the stations and on the streets, a terrible kind of gradual piling-up of human life, one upon the other...

*The trains were coming in from Pakistan?*

Oh yes, carrying loads of refugees and dumping them on the station platforms. They were just filling up the platforms and living a strange kind of existence, whole families taking up about four to six square feet of space, and children being born there, and the dirt and everything. And yet they survived, quite a number of them... But that's how we felt the thing... as a kind of direct visual experience, looking at people, seeing them pouring into the city and leading a fantastic existence. Theoretically, it seemed like the most ridiculous, absurd thing to happen.

*What kind of films did you see before 1947 or so?*

There were fewer films in those days than now. My general habits didn't include the local products, and it was mainly American films that I saw, before we started the Film Society in 1947. It was ninety per cent American films, with an occasional British one thrown in and sometimes a chance French or Italian picture.

*What about the classics? Had you seen Eisenstein?*

We did get to see some Russian films, because the Russians were allies and they sent out things like the Maxim Gorki trilogy, Eisenstein's films, some of Pudovkin's. In fact, oh yes, that's an important event... Pudovkin and Cherkassov came to Calcutta in 1946 or '47. Before that I had seen *Ivan the Terrible*, and I asked Cherkassov how he managed to get his eyes so wide open, because he had normal kind of small eyes, not deep set eyes. And he said that 'Eisenstein made me do it.' He was slightly critical of the way he was handled by Eisenstein, made to assume postures that were very difficult, 'so at the end of the day I would have muscle pains all over my body.'

*So the personal contact meant something to the new Indian film: visits by Pudovkin... and Renoir, I suppose?*

Renoir came later, of course, in 1949. I had seen only American Renoirs, *The Southerner*, *This Land is Mine*. *The Southerner* seemed a remarkable film, very fresh, very unconventional, taking an American subject and giving it a kind of European colouring. The film was a very important experience for me, and the moment I discovered that Renoir was in town I went and looked him up.

*What in your opinion were his qualities at that time?*

A feeling for nature; a deep humanism with a kind of a preference for the shades of grey, a sort of Chekovian quality; and his lyricism and the avoidance of clichés. In one of the American films you have a scene of a fight, which is shot almost static, from one viewpoint. Whereas normally you have cuts—the blows go this way, that way, cuts, inter-cuts—here is one big fight scene in a single shot taken from a normal viewpoint, nothing low, nothing too high up, no wide-angle, nothing. So that seemed like a remarkable thing, a perfect harmony of form and content.

*What happened then, when these two people met: Jean Renoir and Satyajit Ray?*

I was full of admiration for him, and I looked up to him. Sometimes one is disappointed meeting an artist one admires, because as a person he turns out to be something you can't warm to, can't get close to. But Renoir was such a wonderful man, deep, gentle, humorous and full of wisdom... I went as many times as I could after my office, which would be around six o'clock in the evening. He would have worked the whole day on the scenario of *The River*, and I would pester him with questions about his French films, which I hadn't seen, and then I went location hunting with him. I knew the Calcutta suburbs and nearby villages, for I had already started going around on my own, taking train trips outside the city, because I had the making of *Pather Panchali* in mind.

*Did you discuss your idea with Renoir?*

Yes. I said, this is a kind of a story, this is a kind of a situation, this is a kind of a family... and he said 'it sounds wonderful, make it, I think it will make a fine film.'

*Then when he started shooting... I think there is a sort of myth that you were his assistant director.*

I wished I could be, but he was shooting about ten miles away from Calcutta. Since I still had my job, I could only go on three or four Sundays. When I went, I stayed the whole day and watched the whole thing, but I actually saw more of him when he was here the first time and came to look for locations.

*What did you feel when the film came out? Was THE RIVER a film about the real India, or about something else?*

I can't say it was a film about the real India. I mean, the background was Indian and it was most marvellously used... riverside, the boats and the fishermen and the general landscape. But the story itself was a bit idealistic, not terribly interesting, about an English jute-mill manager and his family, adolescents mainly, and certainly not an Indian story and even as a Western story in an Indian setting certainly not so near the truth, because it had been idealised. There are characteristic Renoir touches there. I enjoyed it, but it doesn't of course compare with his French films.

*I am certain that Italian neo-realism meant a lot to you. When did you see your first De Sica?*

It was in 1950. I went to England to work in the head office of the Calcutta advertising agency. I was sent out for six months, and in the six months I was able to see 100 or 99 or 101 films, and the first film I saw there was *Bicycle Thieves*. It was in a double-bill at the Curzon with *A Night at the Opera*. It made a very, very interesting combination, but *Bicycle Thieves*... it just gored me. I was terribly excited, also, because I already had this idea of making *Pather Panchali*, but I wasn't sure whether one could really work with an entirely amateur cast.

*And here you had the proof.*

I had the proof. And it was all shot on location, at least ninety per cent shot on location. I had the proof that one could shoot out there, in all kinds of light. I had been told by professional directors here that you had to have control over the light, which meant you had to have artificial light. 'You can't control the sun,' that's what they said. 'And if you want rain, you have to create it artificially, because how could you control actual natural rain, it stops and goes and comes.'

*When did you first feel that it was film you were going to make?*

It had been growing, but about 1946 or '47 I felt that I had to make a film. Before that I had of course illustrated an edition of *Pather Panchali*, and the book had attracted me as a possible film source. Then about 1947 I started the film society, and in 1948 I developed a new hobby. I was writing scenarios of films, based on books which had been acquired already for filming. Suppose I read in the papers that such and such a book has been bought and is being made into a film, I would write a scenario and later compare it with the treatment on the screen.

*There are all kinds of stories about you having to go to the pawnshop with your wife's jewels, to be able to start PATHER PANCHALI. Is there any truth in that?*

It's true. For one year I was trying to sell the scenario, to peddle it. I went to all the producers listed in Calcutta, everybody without exception, and since nobody would buy it, I decided to start anyway, because we wanted some footage to prove that we were not incapable of making films. So I got some money against my insurance policies. We started shooting, and that fund ran out very soon. Then I sold some art books, some records and some of my wife's jewellery. Little trickles of money came, and part of the salary I was earning as art director, because I still had my job. All we had to spend was on raw stock, hire of a camera, and our conveniences, transport and so on. But by the time we had shot about 4,000 feet there was no money left, and I had nothing more to pawn.

*And this was where the government of West Bengal came in?*

Not immediately. That was one year after our stopping. Because then we had given up hope, we told everybody, 'this is as far as we can do, so goodbye and thank you,' but everybody was terribly unhappy. I still had my advertising job, but my mind was on the film. But I took my mind off the film, and then at one point somebody said that we should approach the Chief Minister then, Dr. Roy, and in a few days we heard that

Dr. Roy was anxious to see me and talk to me. And then it happened, it just happened...

*You got what you needed, and the film was finished, and then comes the success story of PATHER PANCHALI.*

Well, they were at first not terribly anxious to release the film. It lay three months or so, without being released. Then in the first two weeks of its run it didn't do so well, but from the third week onwards there were full houses every day. We had what is known as fixed booking for six weeks, because that's all that was available. After those six weeks it was moved to another theatre, where it played for seven weeks more, and in those thirteen weeks the government got back their money, and all that comes after is profit. They've made something like 1,500 per cent profit now, and there is still money coming all the time.

*And who gets the profit, you or the government?*

After Dr. Roy said 'Go ahead,' I had to deal with someone else, probably Home Publicity Department. I told them, since I was taking a very small salary, 'Why not give me the foreign rights?' because I had an idea that the film might go out some day and earn a bit of success. And they said, 'Oh, certainly, we'll look into that.' But when the contract came, I found no mention of the foreign rights. They said, 'Oh, a detail we'll attend to later, don't bother and sign it.' I had to sign at that point, because we were really very anxious to start again. And after the success of the film, they just didn't bring up the subject again. I've tried to mention it, and they say, 'No, it's not in the contract, how can we give it to you?'

*Didn't you get something from that profit for the next film?*

No, they said: 'A director whose first film is a success is bound to be a failure in the second film.'

*How much did the production of PATHER PANCHALI cost in all, if you count in the value of the rupee today?*

In those days it cost a little over Rs. 150,000, whereas an average film now costs twice that much. But we could have shot it with much less money, if it had been filmed in the proper way and not spread over two and a half years. In the rainy season we had no money, because the government were then checking the accounts of the previous instalments, so the monsoon passed and in October we got some money. Normally there are no rains in October, but we hadn't yet finished the rain scenes and we went out every day with the camera and the two children, hoping for some rain. So that cost money, you see.

*Have you written all your scripts yourself?*

All of them, yes. I can hardly call it writing. I've developed a special system, because my feeling is that writing a scenario is not a literary business at all, so I don't waste literary effort on that. I merely write certain very laconic descriptions; mainly it's all in sketches and with little notes on the dialogue and movements.

*But literature seems to have been a starting point for you in several cases.*

Oh yes. But these novels and short stories have all been considerably adapted. There is always something in the story that attracts me. It does not have to be the whole thing, but maybe certain crucial things which strike me as being filmic. I read the story many, many times, and then I shut the book and leave it.

*Tell me one thing: the scene in THE WORLD OF APU with the hairpin, was that written down or just created, alive?*

That was written down. It was very important, and I gave a great deal of thought to it, because in Indian cinema you are not supposed to show kissing or close embraces or intimate love scenes, nothing of that sort, particularly not in 1958. But I wanted something that would suggest strongly intimacy, the tenderness of married life, what it does to an erstwhile bachelor suddenly to have another pillow next to his own. Suppose the wife is gone when he wakes up in the morning, and how can we suggest, without words, that he feels her presence close to him and that a change has come over his life? So here is the hairpin, something that could never possibly have been there six months ago, you see. That was well thought out, but sometimes of course such things arrive at the very last moment.



"THE ADVENTURES OF GOOPY AND BAGHA". PAGES FROM THE SCRIPT.

Does Apu have anything to do with Tagore, or is this another myth?

I should think so. It so happens that Soumitra Chatterjee, who plays Apu, looks very much like the young Tagore, when he grows a beard. I don't know what else there is, except that he recites Tagore a good deal. In the boats, going to the wedding, Apu is reciting poetry, and a young man of his period would of course be terribly influenced by Tagore.

Could you say what Tagore meant to such a young Indian, or what he meant to you twenty-five years ago?

In our student days of course his influence was inescapable, in the sense that it was in the poetry, it was in his prose, it was in his music and then also in his painting. He started painting at the age of seventy-four; and I think he is one of the greatest, the most interesting of modern Indian painters. Now of course the young people are getting away from his influence, while we as students felt that Tagore was there all the time, hovering behind us or over our heads.

Is there much of an autobiographical element in the Apu trilogy?

Certainly not in the first and third parts, but in the second part maybe. Again, you must realise that the material evolved from the original book. Whatever is in the film is there in its germinal form already in the book. But in the second part I was able to identify with the adolescent Apu in his relationship with the widowed mother, because I was in the same position myself. Of course I wasn't living in a village, and I didn't have to get away from my mother to study, but unconsciously, consciously, or subconsciously I was relating my own experience with Apu's and was able, I think, to get into the psychological aspects of the thing quite a bit, beneath the skin.

But Apu's idealism, his kind of innocence... that's something of the past, isn't it?

Well, the villages are all coming closer to the city now, or the city is being extended towards the villages, and it's probably difficult to find innocence and naiveté to that degree these days in young village boys. This was meant to be a picture of Bengal in the 1930s. Now of course electricity has come to the villages, and there are more networks of railways, etc.

What about railway trains? From your films it looks as if you were fond of trains.

This train in the first part springs from the book, again. When I made the second part, I could see that the train had to be there too, because Apu was making journeys between the city and the village, and I thought it would be interesting to have the train within sight of the village where he lived. When I made the third part, I decided to have Apu living right on the tracks. I have never seen the three films together, but people who have say it works beautifully with the trains as a kind of running motif.

Symbolic...

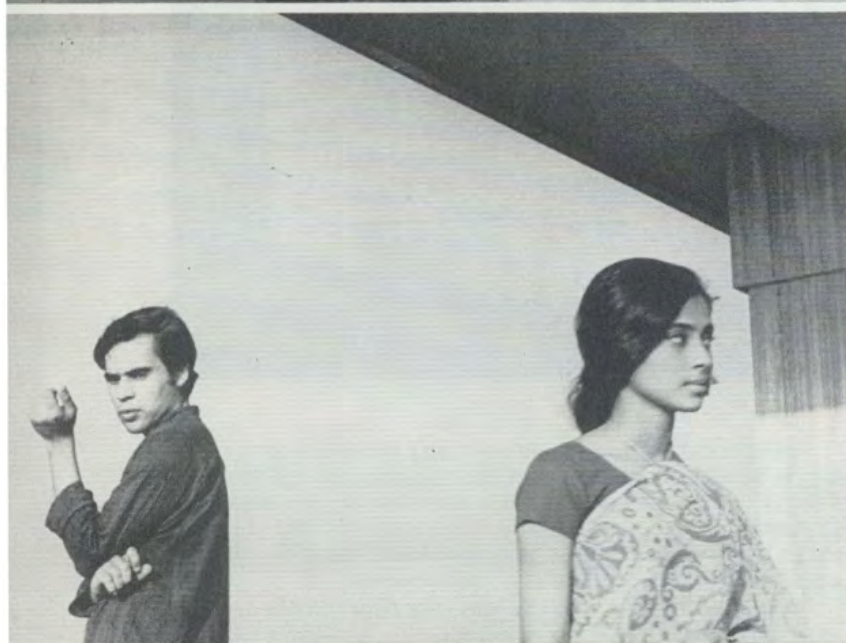
Yes, but realistic at the same time. Trains have something about them... it's a symbol of a journey, it's a symbol also of connections, between the rural India and metropolitan India.

Will there be another train? I remember you told me about a train somewhere in Calcutta that you liked very much.

Oh that train, I hope it lasts that long! It's owned by the Martin Company, the big steel company, and it looks like one of those George Stephenson trains with a long funnel and smoke coming out, jaggling through courtyards. It's very, very funny, because you can stop it by waving your hand. And if the driver wants to pluck a mango, he'll stop the train and get off, pick the fruit and then get it going again.

How do you look upon the chief character in JALSAGHAR, this landlord who loves music and gets destroyed by his passion?

It is a story about music, and it's undeniable that the



landlords, the zamindars, were great patrons of music. This landlord in the film is portrayed as a figure who is doomed, but before he dies out he has a kind of last flame. Of course I wanted the contrast with the nouveau riche, the money-lender who comes back and settles in the village, a big man with a big house, he being a man without culture, gross, and the zamindar being a man of refinement.

*So the zamindar acquires a sort of greatness, because he is doomed and we realise that so early in the film?*

Yes, this is the basis of the film. That's why I made it a flashback film, so that I could show him in his kind of lousy... in his evening state, and then have this little story which tells how he arrived at this state, and then just have him killed off at the end.

*Is the music of your own composition, as in most of your films?*

No, that's a more recent phenomenon, because right up to 1960 I was using other composers. I used Ravi Shankar in four films, and here the score was composed by Vilayat Khan, a sitar player who in my opinion is even greater than Ravi Shankar. He is a classical musician, whose father was attached to just such a zamindar, and these musicians are always grateful to the tradition, the patronage of landlords and noblemen. Vilayat Khan loved the film, and he didn't see the point of feudalism dying out. He has great admiration for this character, and he composed the most wonderful noble themes for the film.

*Had you written the music yourself, you would maybe have given it an ironical touch?*

Yes, I would have given an ironic edge to it, even from the beginning, suggesting the doom that was coming. But for him it was all sweetness and greatness.

*Is neo-realism possible today in Calcutta?*

One thing against that is that you can't shoot out in the streets. A neo-realism without actual shooting out on location with actual people is impossible. In Italy they could at least get the police to handle the crowd, but here people don't like the image of the police at all, and if you have them flashing their batons, they'll probably start a riot. They will be even more unmanageable with the police around, so what you do you have to do yourself, by personal persuasion. So it's difficult here in the city.

*What do you feel about a man working in a very different way from you? I am thinking of Godard, who starts working on a film with three pages on his knee.*

Yes, but with the kind of film that he makes he doesn't need a prepared, regular scenario, because one of his main purposes is to show the disjointedness of modern life, the lack of order, the lack of definite form, and you can only do that by breaking it up.

*There must be a relation between form and content, almost an agreement?*

I think so. Sometimes the form is dictated by a character, for example. When Truffaut made *Jules et Jim*, for instance, lots of people talked about it as a very free style of editing. I think it all derived from the fact of the girl.

*And Jeanne Moreau herself?*

Jeanne Moreau, and the character of Catherine. Unless Truffaut adopted that style, I don't think the film could express the form so well. It couldn't have been told in a conventional form.

*Have you a feeling for Ingmar Bergman?*

Yes, I do admire him... He is a tremendous craftsman, he has got a wonderful team of actors, who can do anything he wants them to, and he's got a sense of drama, which probably derives from his constant work in the theatre. As a director I find him fascinating, although I can say that I am not at all times in sympathy with what he says. I don't care for his preoccupations, they are not very important preoccupations to me, certain things about religion and... His preoccupations are not mine, but the fact remains that he can hold me.

*And you don't react against his using the same actors in film after film? You know, you can see Gunnar Björnstrand or Eva*

RAY'S NEW FILM, "SIDDHARTHA AND THE CITY". PHOTOGRAPHS BY NEMAI GHOSH.

*Dahlbeck or Ingrid Thulin instead of the characters they are supposed to represent.*

But it's not neo-realism that he is doing, where you want to see new faces. Cary Grant was at one point supposed to play the leading part in *Bicycle Thieves*. Well, anyway, De Sica couldn't get him. I would hate to see Cary Grant in *Bicycle Thieves*, but I would love to see all the known faces in the next Bergman film.

*What about Dreyer? Do you find him too slow?*

I don't mind slow films. Sometimes I'm irritated by slowness, but I don't think slowness *per se* is a fault, because there is slow music, there is fast music . . . what is difficult is to control. It's much more difficult to make a successful slow film. But I find Dreyer a little too sparse, a little too austere at times. I could wish for a little . . . maybe humour here and there.

*And Buñuel?*

Unfortunately I have not seen the best. I've seen *The Exterminating Angel*, which I think is quite brilliant. At every point you suspect it's going to collapse, but somehow he manages to create conviction and carry you on . . . I met Buñuel, incidentally, two years ago. We were staying in the same hotel in Acapulco. For about fifteen days he and I were the first to arrive at the breakfast table. (He is a very early riser, like me.) Very interesting to talk to. He was a tremendous admirer of *Pather Panchali*.

*But he can't hear?*

Very deaf and very anti-Godard, I found him. He said, 'I'll give him two years more, he is just a fashion.' And it just shows. . .

*We talked about JALSAGHAR. What about your own relation to music?*

Music was my first love. Ever since my schooldays I developed a tremendous interest, which has been growing and growing, in the Western classical music. And then came our own classical music. So I started to build up a record collection. I would buy the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony this month, and the second movement the second month, the third movement the third month, like that, for the little pocket-money I had.

*Do you still live with Beethoven?*

Not Beethoven any more really, except maybe some chamber music, but Bach is always there, and I am also extremely fond of Mozart. I play his operas and choral works quite a bit now. And baroque, mainly Scarlatti, Rameau, Couperin, the early baroque, things like Schütz and Palestrina. Even Gregorian chants and Monteverdi, things like that more and more. Some modern musicians. I like Bartok's chamber music very much, his quartets.

*Something that you don't like at all?*

Well, I can't bear some of the romantics, like . . . some of Schumann, some of Schubert. The romantic stuff bores me.

*Could that partly be because there is nothing of that kind in Indian culture, in Indian music?*

Oh, there is a lot of that in Indian music. A good deal of Indian music is very romantic, but that I don't like.

*Romantic and weak?*

Romantic and weak. Over-sweet, you know, lachrymose.

*Could you make a film in English?*

I could certainly make a film in English, but not in the West. I prefer to work here.

*Could you make a film of A PASSAGE TO INDIA?*

I could. In fact, I went quite a way with this idea. I went to Cambridge to see Forster three years ago. He's very, very nice. He's too nice, in the sense that he refuses to discuss practical aspects of a thing. He is worried about legal tangles, this and that, drawing up contracts. I still hope to make that film some day. The rights are still available. But I am anxious that it should be done while he is alive, because after . . . God forbid if there is another heart attack and if he dies, the agents might raise the price to impossible. . .

*And what about the Peter Sellers film?*

Don't call it a Peter Sellers film, because Sellers may not be in it; as things stand at the moment I'm not sure. But Columbia still wants to make it, so it will be made, though I'll probably have to do something else in the meantime. Anyhow, I'll shoot

that here, in a village in Bengal, and the script is fifty per cent in English. I want to make it in colour, because for one simple reason, there is a spaceship involved in it, which is supposedly of gold. So how can you see this gold in black and white . . . ? It's a science fiction story, but it's about a spaceship which lands in a pond.

*Do you think . . . the movies you've made up till now, have they been understood in the West?*

The best reviews of my films have been published in the West.

*But there may have been significant misunderstandings?*

Oh, there have been meanings imputed and interpretations given which never had anything to do with my intentions, but some of it has been most penetrating. I have been amazed by the amount of penetration in the reviews of a thing like *The Goddess*, which deals with superstition and very Oriental aspects of metaphysics and religion. And yet a tremendous lot of perception. One of the best reviews of *Charulata* appeared in the West, in SIGHT AND SOUND.

*Are you a fatalist?*

I'm very optimistic, but I'm slightly fatalistic about India. . . What could you do? What can you do? All the political parties have been disappointing, and there isn't one single person that you can look up to, and corruption on all levels of public and private work, and a certain laziness and lack of values and nothing to guide. I think a certain amount of pessimism is. . . That's why I love to lose myself in my work.

*Are you religious? Do you believe that God created Man, or that Man created God?*

My own feeling is that Man created God, yes I think so. But you see, there is always this mystery about the beginning of life, and I like to think back and back and take my mind back right to the beginning of time. But I don't think that God is a useful thing to believe in, I don't see the necessity of that at all. I think it's more important now, in view of what has been happening, to believe in scientific knowledge. I don't *disbelieve* in things like spiritualism or séances or planchettes or extra-sensory perception. . .

*They could be explained by science, you mean?*

I think at some point they are going to be; I think all this could be explained, though maybe it will take a very, very long time. I have been reading a great deal about dreams, about memories, about ESP and rebirth and memory of a previous birth and all that, and I can't brush it all aside.

In 1960, when I was doing research on Tagore for the documentary I made about his life, I was given access to all his manuscripts, everything. The whole room was left open to me and I could spend the day there; and I came across three sheets of paper which recorded conversations that took place at three separate séances arranged by Tagore. Apparently he was a great believer in these things, and it was all done through a medium, and one of the conversations is with my father, who died very young, at the age of thirty-six. He was very close to Tagore, and my father himself was a poet, writer and painter, all kinds of things. He was very gifted, and a great favourite of Tagore's. Tagore now wants this medium to call for the spirit of so and so, and he arises, and there is a long conversation which has references to me. . . my father ostensibly asking Tagore, 'Why don't you take my son into your university?' and he says, 'Well, I'll do something about it at some point, he is still very young, but I think he will come.' Like that. . . Tagore had just started painting then, nobody knew about this, and he puts the question, 'Do you think my painting will earn success?' and there is a very strongly worded answer saying 'Yes, but first abroad.' And this was two, three years before the first exhibition of Tagore's paintings took place in Europe, and all the sensation it created. So I can't dismiss this thing, and that conversation is so full of extraordinary things, details which only my father could have known. . .

*So the séance and science don't have to be two separate worlds?*

I don't think so. I think every phenomenon will have a scientific explanation, sooner or later.

*Do you think the artist should stand aloof, or be committed?*

Unless one lives completely isolated from the general

picture of life, a certain amount of commitment is unavoidable. But as an artist I never want to be a propagandist, because I don't think anybody is in a position to give answers to social problems, definite, final answers. No propaganda works really, because... I'll tell you something Renoir said to me once: 'There are lots of anti-war films being made; I made what is generally considered as the most humane anti-war film, *La Grande Illusion*, in 1938, and in 1939 the war broke out.'

Then later he made another anti-war film, *LE CAPORAL EPINGLE*.

Yes, more remote. Did it work? It doesn't work. I think I like to present problems and make the public conscious of the presence of certain social problems and let them think for themselves. But a certain taking of sides is unavoidable, if you have strong sympathies of your own. So in a sense you are committing yourself; but I don't think it's necessary, important or right for an artist to provide answers, to say 'this is right and this is wrong.'

*Do you vote?*

I have not always voted, I must tell you that. This year I will probably not vote at all. I think it's important to vote, because the wrong man might be elected; that's a negative reason. I find politics a very, very confused and changeable thing, and I think there is something corrupt about politics. People I am friendly with belong to the left, inevitably, but in a moment of crisis I have seen them not act in the desirable way.

*Gandhi or Nehru, who is the greater man to you?*

I was closer to Nehru, I think. I admired Nehru, I understood him better, because I am also in a way a kind of product of East and West. A certain liberalism, a certain awareness of Western values and a fusion of Eastern and Western values was in Nehru, which I didn't find in Gandhi. But of course as a man, as a symbol, in contact with India's multitude, he was quite extraordinary. But as a man... I always understood what Nehru was doing, as I understood what Tagore was doing—because you can't leave Tagore out of this, it's a triangle.

*This fusion you mentioned, within Nehru and within yourself, have you felt that as a strength, or as both a strength and a weakness?*

As a strength, all along. But you have to have the backing of your own culture very much. Even when I made my first film

the awareness was there. I had a Western education, I studied English, but more and more over the last ten years I have been going back and back to the history of my country, my people, my past, my culture...

*What is the best in your own tradition?*

Instead of saying 'the best', let us say 'what is characteristic'. Well, think of starting right from the Sanskrit classics, you see: the tremendous closeness to nature, even in the Upanishads and Vedas, and a profound kind of philosophy... the presence of the neutron, the atom, the whole idea of the universe being also in a little point, as well as around and all over you, the universe being contained...

I'll tell you a story here. In 1928, when I was seven, I went with my mother to Tagore's university. I had my little autograph book, newly bought, and my mother gave the book to Tagore and said, 'My son would like a few lines of verse from you.' And he said, 'Leave the book with me.' Next day I went to collect it, and he brought it out and said: 'I have written something for you, which you won't understand now, but when you grow up you will understand it.' It's one of the best things he ever wrote in a small manner, and what it means is this: 'I have travelled all round the world to see the rivers and the mountains, and I've spent a lot of money. I have gone to great lengths, I have seen everything, but I forgot to see just outside my house a dewdrop on a little blade of grass, a dewdrop which reflects in its convexity the whole universe around you.'

*And this dewdrop is in the Indian tradition?*

This is Indian tradition. It's very, very important. The presence of the essential thing in a very small detail, which you must catch in order to express the larger thing; and this is in Indian art, this is in Rajput miniatures, this is in Ajanta, this is in Ellora, this is in the classics, in Kalidasa, in Sakuntala, in folk-poetry, in folk-singing. This is the essence, I think.

*So the essence is an enormous combination of the cosmic and the microscopic... or electron-microscopic?*

Yes, and this is becoming more and more clear to me. I recently bought a book with a whole series of pictures of electron-microscope photographs of points, pin-points of this and that, maybe a little piece of alga, a piece of protoplasm or the head of a thing, and the patterns that it reveals, it goes right back to the Upanishads...

I don't know what a maybe two thousand times more powerful microscope is going to show... how far life extends in the cellular form. I think this awareness of the cellular form in the early classics... and I think of works of art as being cellular, as being little, little nodes, little, little molecules which connect up in details and details and also in a total conception of the general form and a conception of the detail, in a density, a richness, which a lot of Westerners also have.

*It could hardly be in works of social realism.*

No, no, because then you start with something else. You start with a conclusion, whereas in my case, when I write an original story, I start with characters and the characters develop the plot by their own truth and their own volition. This is the opposite of Hitchcock. Hitchcock already has a pattern, and he puts in two-dimensional characters. With me it's different, and I'm sure with Renoir, with Chekov. I have learnt from these people a great deal. I have learnt as much from my own classics as from these people, whom I admire, instinctively admire, greatly admire. But in my case I start with characters and I find that I don't know what the ending is going to be like, until I have conceived a good part of it and find how they are reacting against each other. I place two characters and watch them reacting, and as far as my knowledge goes I proceed along the lines of truth, and there develops a story.

*Do you think there is likely to be a socialist revolution in India, or is religion too much in the way for that?*

Well, go to Benares, go to the ghats and you will see that Communism is a million miles away, maybe in the moon. There are such ingrained habits, religious habits. I am talking of the multitude now. I am not talking of the educated, the young students, and of course everything falls back on education and the spread of education. If that could take place... only through education could it happen.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STIG T. KARLSSON



'TRISTANA': CATHERINE DENEUVE, LOLA GAOS.



# Cannes 70

**N**O ONE WITH AN EYE to rhyme or reason could possibly have planned the Cannes Festival the way it is now. It has grown like some great untidy garden, outwards from the trim rosebeds of the main competitive festival, to the rather severe rock garden of the Critics' Week (emphasis: Third World, radicalism, 'direct' cinema), the promising wilderness of the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (eight films a day, seven days a week; large, restless, dedicated audience, some of it young enough to be seen disappearing on push-bikes), and the compost heap, if that is the word for it, of the Marché du Film (main preoccupation: the quest for another *I Am Curious—Yellow*). It is hopelessly untidy and exceptionally valuable; trimmed back and rationalised, it could well lose a lot of its particular, heterogeneous virtue.

Any dissatisfactions with Cannes (and festivals are great occasions for grumbling) really have to do with a perceptible weakness at the centre. It might be possible to assemble a rather more generally distinguished competitive fortnight, and people shouldn't so often emerge from the main cinema feeling their time might have been better spent somewhere on the periphery. Also, films like Buñuel's *Tristana* and Bergman's *A Passion* arrive out of competition; and when the jury can't even consider pictures of this calibre, it becomes rather like making a big race book without the favourite. In saluting *M\*A\*S\*H* this time, the jury were paying tribute not just to quite a funny film but to the new Hollywood iconoclasm. It isn't news when Buñuel parodies the Last Supper; it is still news when the parody comes from 20th Century-Fox. And a growing problem for festival prize-givers must be whether to reward the absolute best, or to single out something with a newer excitement value. I would like to have seen *Tristana* in competition; and I'd like to have seen it win. But a prize for

*M\*A\*S\*H* is bowled straight down the middle of the wicket for 1970.

If the Festival wants to give its jurors something new to bite on, however, what possible principle of selection could explain the choice of Otto Preminger's *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon*? This glutinously unlovely blend of old-time *kitsch* and last year's outspokenness features a boy who has fits, a homosexual in a wheelchair, and a girl with an acid-burned face (Liza Minnelli), who all set up housekeeping together, while the camera hangs on every twitch, scar and stumble. After *Hurry Sundown* perhaps nothing should surprise one; but *Junie Moon* did. The Brazilians, after Glauber Rocha, let their reputation down thumpingly with Walter Khouiri's *Palace of Angels*, an absurd, shiny piece about three smart girls who raid the office files to find clients for a dash into the call girl market; and the Argentinians, after Torre Nilsson, hardly did themselves much better service with Manuel Antin's *Don Segundo Sombra*, a flaccid chronicle of gaucho life.

Even the main French entry, Claude Sautet's *Les Choses de la Vie*, current hit of the boulevard cinemas, might perhaps have been better left there. Michel Piccoli brings the usual impeccable suavity and ruefulness to the part of a middle-aged man at a crossroads in his emotional affairs; Romy Schneider bangs on a typewriter; everyone smokes tremendously. The car smash which frames the narrative is expertly done, in fast, slow and every other kind of motion; but the rest is accomplished maundering. On the boulevard front, I preferred Ettore Scola's *Dramma della Gelosia*, with Vitti and Mastroianni amicably impersonating a flowergirl and a bricklayer, and some cheerful, heartless jokes. The formula for noisy Italian comedy, everyone spoofing grand opera emotions with



"LE BOUCHER": JEAN YANNE, STEPHANE AUDRAN.

dialogue out of the *fumetti*, never changes much; but there are one or two neat switches here, like the old romantic beaches now all turned to rubbish dumps, or the heroine's 'I'd do anything for you' speech answered with the cry of 'Vote Communist'.

Meanwhile, Buñuel and Bergman. . . quality, command, the frightening simplicity of artists who have gone beyond trying to impress anyone. Buñuel's *Tristana* is the film he originally set out to make in Spain seven years ago, when the censors intervened; mentally, therefore, it possibly belongs back with *Viridiana* (the same actor, Fernando Rey, reappears) rather than with the more teasing temper of *La Voie Lactée*. Its characters are traditional enough: old man, young ward (Catherine Deneuve), the artist she runs off with. The girl's favourite pastime (apparently a Buñuel family game as well) is inviting people to choose between two apparently identical objects—two peas, two routes to church. Having made her own choice of conventional romance, she later returns home ill, has a leg amputated, and stumps imperiously and implacably about the house, eventually reducing the old free-thinker to spending pitiable afternoons offering sweetmeats to visiting priests. At the end, a howling Buñuelian wind blows as we flick back along the course of this particular destiny. Nothing could be other than it is, partly because of the perverse will-powers at work among the characters, partly because Buñuel's own swift, unperplexed, corner-cutting filming implies its own inevitability. *Tristana* is harsh, comic, precise, proudly Spanish in ambience and moods: in other words, Buñuelian to the last inch of celluloid.

The heroine of *A Passion* also has trouble getting around,

"THE CANNIBALS": PIERRE CLEMENTI, BRITT EKLAND.



having damaged her leg in a car crash which killed her husband and child. Her guilty malaise is on the surface; that of the pipe-smoking, solicitous, vulnerable hero is better concealed, though Bergman suggests it, not exactly subtly, by having him continually drop and smash things. Once again we are on Bergman's island, with his actors (Von Sydow, Liv Ullmann, Bibi Andersson) confronting the corruptions of the heart. The widow believes in truth but lives on the fraught lie of a happy marriage; when she dreams, Liv Ullmann is back in the boat of the last scene of *The Shame* (one of Bergman's most thunderous echo effects from film to film), and comes ashore into another wilderness. Somewhere on the island a maniac is savaging sheep and torturing dachshunds; and it is within the tantalising framework of an unresolved mystery story that the film hovers over its own enigmatic, enervating dark nights of the soul. Interludes in which the actors step out of character to comment platitudinously on the problems of their roles look awkward because obviously directed and scripted; but if they fail as a device, they reinforce Bergman's sense of the final mystery of personality, and the self-consciousness of art. *A Passion* is, even in Bergmanian terms, an intractable film, deliberately blurring its characters, occasionally plunging them into moments of haunting strangeness, the waking dream atmosphere of his archipelago. It seems to me, though, a more significant work than the more open *The Shame*.

Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher*, shown out of festival, is also about a village living under a threat: a series of killings; policemen with tracker dogs heading ominously into the undergrowth past the school playground. The schoolmistress (Stéphane Audran) and the butcher (Jean Yanne) are the central characters in this beautifully Hitchcockian exercise in applied suspense, and totally Chabrolian exercise in personality and French provincial landscape. Any amount of eating and drinking, including a village wedding breakfast, and a magnificently audacious bit of Hitchcockery in which murder is discovered when blood drips down on to a bun during the school picnic. The control, as in *Killer!*, is classical and impeccable: the dozing little town in Périgord, pretty as a picture; the cool characterisation; suspicion as the catalyst for a deepening, devious relationship.

None of these film-makers gives an inch to fashion: immense *auteurs*, they are, as it were, masters of private islands. The enclosed setting reappears in István Gaál's *The Falcons*, and again a mark of the director's success is one's absolute involvement in a particular landscape. A young stranger comes, for no very apparent purpose, to a remote ranch where hunting falcons are trained. The trainer initiates him into a disciplinary philosophy; there are expeditions across the Jancsó landscape—one very strange one in search of a peregrine which has reverted to wilder ways. In an extraordinary sequence, magpies take refuge among a flock of sheep, flustered fugitives from a flight of hawk bombers. An oblique, tightly-knotted allegory of political power may be read through Gaál's imagery; but in essence the strength of *The Falcons* is the sense of a confrontation with a secretive outpost, seen first as romantically alien, then as obsessed with its own impersonal cruelties and procedures. The hooded falcons and their threatening, cheerful trainer become utterly alarming: in the end, the stranger can only turn and run.

Gaál's film bored people who felt they were merely being given unwanted instruction about falconry; but if the imagery holds up, the rest follows, and Gaál's allegory is founded on his birds. In somewhat the same way, Liliana Cavani's *The Cannibals*, a kind of up-dated *Antigone*, works through the hallucinatory effect of shots of ordinary, traffic-jammed Italian streets, with pedestrians picking their way past the unburied corpses littering the pavements. A girl (Britt Ekland) sets out to bury her brother; a very strange stranger (Pierre Clémenti), whose fish symbols are intended, one might suppose, to link a modern underground with the early Christians, comes to her help. They end up as battered victims of impersonal authority, first martyrs of a new resistance movement. It sounds schematic, and is; but although some sequences are over-worked embellishments, *The Cannibals* is carried by a calm but rather freakish visual sense, a dislocation as disquieting as the corpses

among the traffic. An intelligent, unexpected film, it seems well worth someone's trouble to import.

Lasse Forsberg's *Misshandlingen* (*The Assault*) might also sound unpromising. A radical young Swede gets into a punch-up with a stranger to whom he expounds the social injustice of driving a Jaguar; put through the hoops of psychiatric and other enquiries, he finally ends up strapped down and sedated in a madhouse. But this isn't the flat sociological document it sounds, partly because Forsberg films it so freshly (particularly the sub-plot about the hero's friend, the shopgirl who invades his flat with a monster pot-plant, and the incidental lesson that you can't just sleep with the proletariat); and partly because Forsberg sees his young radical as both dangerously mad and abrasively sane. There's a strong suggestion at the end that the treatment is all wrong; but an honest openness which leaves no suggestion of how the baffled psychiatrists and social workers could reach other conclusions.

Also shown in the Critics' Week, *Kes* stood up well to the competition and seemed to have been greatly admired, though even Susan Sontag admitted to a dependence on the French subtitles. (Proudly, the Critics' Week organisers claimed theirs was the *original* language version, though I gather only about four minutes of broadest Barnsley was actually redubbed for London.) But perhaps the most potentially significant Critics' Week film was Robert Kramer's grey-faced, flat-voiced *Ice*, a view from the New York Jewish intelligentsia of America's Alphaville. Tendentious, drably filmed, and giving a not very encouraging suggestion of the revolutionaries' powers of persuasion and ability to muster arguments, *Ice* has the value of a counterbalance to the flash revolution that Hollywood is taking over. A disjointed, depressive film, its main quality is its apprehension: the fear of informers, secret police, the steady erosion of liberty, and the nervy plotting of armed sorties from the great concrete apartment blocks.

I leave to Richard Roud Jean-Marie Straub's film of actors rattling through Corneille against a background of Roman traffic: try as one might to decode the undoubted purpose behind the minimal exercise, it remained for me elusive to the point of total bafflement. Straub's film represents a genuine extremity of cinema, the furthest possible point from the traditional Cannes of the beach and the Carlton terrace and the ardent starlets. Perhaps the mistral kept the starlets under cover this year, but they and their world seem in any case to be forever diminished. It was encouraging to see the British Film Producers' Association and its chief emissaries, Mr. and Mrs. Leon Clore, adapting better than many to the new style, annexing a corner of the beach for plaster lions and unicorns and a rain-darkened Union Jack, but bringing together well-chosen gatherings of critics, film-makers and visiting firemen in that effectively relaxed and communicative atmosphere too often missing from our international public relations.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

THE DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT, so disorganised and uneven last year, has now become the best part of Cannes, with more good films than either the Critics' Week or the main event. More bad ones too, but with over fifty films, that's to be expected. Given its origin and orientation, and given the state of affairs today, the remarkable films were, in one way or another, politically oriented. The most remarkable—and the most oriented in every sense of the word—was Godard's *Wind from the East*, in which he continues his attempts to define a new kind of non-bourgeois cinema; more at ease in the kind of film he now wants to make, he brings wit and even humour of a sort to his subject.

The film is divided into three parts: part one, subdivided into sections (strike, the delegate, active minorities, general assembly, repression, active strike, police state), is a discussion of the nature of film, a history of revolutionary film, and a mini-Western: Gian Maria Volonté, Anne Wiazemsky and others act out a scene from a Third World Western in which the workings of colonialism are laid bare. But before this can begin, the audience is faced with four shots, each lasting about four minutes and without movement, in an attempt, no doubt,



"HARRY MUNTER": JAN NIELSEN.

to separate the men from the boys. Part two begins gaily with the announcement that it is to be an autocritique of part one (e.g., the director's lack of communication with the masses), and ends with a declaration of war against the bourgeois concept of representation. Part three is a call to arms and a defence of violence. Photographically less attractive than *Le Gai Savoir*, *Wind from the East* compensates with its greater assurance, even though the problem of making a film politically (as opposed to making a political film) has still to be solved.

*Comrades*, shown in the Critics' Week on the same day as the Godard, is an example of a 'political film'. On the other hand, it does stand a chance of being seen by a large number of people, so—though theoretically 'wrong'—it might well have more effect than Godard's film. Although many films have been made about factory workers, none of them has been concerned with actual work: like most films, they started at 5.30 p.m., so to speak, and ended at 9.30 a.m., whereas *Comrades* deals with the third of a man's life during which he is at work. The story is a simple one of a young man from the provinces who comes to Paris, gets a job in a factory, and is slowly driven to a revolutionary *prise de conscience*. Beautifully photographed, it uses Brecht-type songs both as divertissement and commentary. This is director Marin Karmitz's second feature, and it is good.

Back to the Directors' Fortnight: Jean-Marie Straub's third feature is also political, but in his own inimitable fashion. *Les Yeux ne veulent pas en tout Temps se fermer ou Peut-être qu'un jour Rome se permettra de choisir à son tour* is an adaptation of a late Corneille tragedy called *Othon*. In its analysis of the struggle for power and denunciation of corruption, the plot is not without its contemporary parallels, and Straub has reinforced these with a complex series of 'distancing' methods. First, although the text is used complete, the actors are almost all non-French, so the rocking-horse rhythm of the alexandrines is never allowed to lull us into forgetting what Corneille is saying. Secondly, although acted in the ruins of the Palatine hill by actors in Roman costumes, the film is shot in such a way that we can always see and hear modern Rome: the consumer society at its noisiest. Lastly, and this upset the French at Cannes almost as much as the Italian accents, the actors speak at widely varying speeds, some of them—like Othon himself—rattling away so fast that it was the abstracted rhythms, the music of his speech that conveyed the meaning, not the actual words. But of course these devices are not only functional: Straub has always been fascinated by the possibilities of counterpoint of all sorts, and in *Othon*, the tension, the excitement, the very meaning of the film comes from the interaction between present and past, verse and Vespas, life and art.

Werner Herzog's *Even Dwarfs Started Small* takes place, like his first film *Signs of Life*, on an island; and the cast consists

*Continued on page 168*

THE TITLE SEQUENCE of *Zabriskie Point* is shot through a yellow filter. Young faces full of concentration or troubled passivity are talking and listening in close-up. Large areas of the frame are out of focus so that we see lips, brows, noses, golden hair, against a mist which may be someone else's shoulder. The camera pans, and the images are cut, enquiringly. Sometimes we swing, sometimes we jump from one blown-up feature to the next. Meanwhile in the early part of the sequence the soundtrack consists of virtually inaudible exchanges between young voices. The movement of the camera is a reflection of the hesitant but clearly impassioned conversation. This is gradually reduced in volume, the soundtrack is taken over by cool music, and with this substitution the faces seem to become more relaxed. Here, it seems, is *jeunesse dorée*.

But wait: the titles completed, the golden filter is removed,

## *Intimations of Reality: Getting the Zabriskie Point* Julian Jebb

the reassuring music is whipped aside. We are in an echoing room at an American university filled with students arguing loudly and inarticulately about revolution. The camera continues to dash from face to face, rarely finding one which is speaking. The faces now seem more vulnerable, more aggressive, and less beautiful. The atmosphere of strain is apparent. No one is much at home with the disciplines of dialectic. There is an authoritative black girl who seems to be in the chair. One bespectacled young man, whose face betrays signs of ironic and mature intelligence, makes a sensible point or two, but these are lost in the *melée* of confused urgency. Another young man with a fine head and sullen eyes gets up and leaves.

At the end of the film, after we have witnessed a dozen shots of a desert house exploding in synchronised sound, music returns to reassure us. In slow motion much of the paraphernalia of domestic life—a wardrobe, a television set, a refrigerator and finally a book-case are set against a lavender cyclorama, some semi-real sky, and then blown-up in lyrical slow motion. The destruction of the book-case is the most poignant and unnerving shot in the sequence. The volumes fly slowly out towards us like white doves and then descend or climb, as if through water. The impact of the explosion has transformed these objects of human knowledge and pleasure into living organisms. It is as if, through their destruction, they are coming awkwardly to life.

Between these two sequences lie a hundred minutes or so of





beautiful and poetic film which has excited the sort of critical response usually accorded to works of irredeemable pretentiousness. It is worth examining the charges which have been levelled against *Zabriskie Point*, less to refute them than to suggest that they are, for the most part, made about a work of art which has not been looked at in the way the director intended, nor in the way the film so richly repays.

A bright-headed, clear-writing and often penetrating critic, Pauline Kael, now of the *New Yorker*, expressed her antagonism to the film in bold mid-cult journalese: 'There is not a new idea or a good idea in the entire movie—not even a small one . . . *Zabriskie Point* is a disaster . . . a huge, jerry-built, crumbling ruin of a movie.' She bases this judgment, like many other American critics, on what she takes to be the intellectual poverty of the film, combined with an ignorance of America and a cynical exploitation of the youth market. This sense of affront, reflected in language of heated contempt, runs through the reviews in both *Time* (' . . . incredibly simple-minded and obvious') and *Newsweek* ('The burlesque is coarse, the radicalism infantile, the dialogue atrocious, and the performances are death barely warmed up . . .')

Richard Cohen, the critic of the hilariously titled newspaper *Women's Wear Daily*, is, I am told, influential. He writes most feverishly: ' . . . Antonioni has offered us his contempt. The whole film is a bag of contemptuous attitudes—contempt for the United States, contempt for actors, contempt for the American landscape, contempt for sex, contempt for his art, contempt for the audience . . . '

Many of the American critics demonstrate an acquaintance with, and in some cases an admiration for earlier Antonioni films. They also live in the country where his latest one is set and where the present writer has never been. But like them I have seen the 'protest' movies (*Easy Rider*,

*Alice's Restaurant*, *Medium Cool*, etc.) which they so often drag up as sticks to beat the film with.

In England the general critical response was no less hostile, but the emphasis was different. Again the critics felt they were being conned into accepting an intellectual film, but what they couldn't bear was that it was beautiful, or (the word recurs again and again in the reviews) 'pretty'.

The most serious misjudgments of the film came, in my view, from two well-established critics, each writing regularly for influential papers: John Coleman in the *New Statesman* and John Russell Taylor in *The Times*.

Mr. Coleman can write wittily and is often illuminating about films with an elaborate intellectual framework, or about others which are centred on an ironic or sophisticated attitude to human relations—but his response to films, that is images and sounds projected, becomes increasingly impoverished. What films say rather than how they look is the criterion for Mr. Coleman, as for so many of his colleagues. He finds *Zabriskie Point* 'incredibly fatigued and silly beneath its pretty surface . . . '

The opening sequence, which I described at the beginning of this article, is seen (perhaps noticed would be a better word) by him as: 'a fairly freeform student discussion . . . [it] is tarted up, orange-yellow behind the credits and so on.' (My italics.) A jaundiced view, one might say. The metaphoric implications of the yellow filter are not even for a moment considered by Mr. Coleman. He betrays fatally his refusal to look, and having looked to consider the intentions of what is there. He has, of course, every right to reject the hypothesis that the exchange of ideas is dead for the young; but there is no evidence that he bothered to see if such a question was being posed.

Although less contemptuous than Mr. Coleman, the critic of *The Times* is equally perverse. Beneath a 'no-nonsense'

style he finds the same difficulty in looking; the fear of being victimised by pretentiousness in the work he is reviewing leads him into a revealing statement: 'Antonioni is a problem because, as a film-maker at least, he is undoubtedly an intellectual, but does not seem to be particularly intelligent . . . [The] ideas remain self-contained capsules, repeated, decorated, but never deepened, enriched, given surprising resonances.'

My own view is almost diametrically opposed to this. Antonioni is an artist whose intelligence informs every move he makes, whose power to evoke emotion is contained first within individual frames of film, then within sequences and finally within the body of the film itself. Later I shall try to demonstrate how this works in *Zabriskie Point* itself.

From these reviews Antonioni emerges as a shifty, sycophantic poseur, a man driving his own bandwagon (not even hitched to a star) arrogantly through terrains of ignorance, peopled by zombies; a desert where fear, disappointment and rage are the only emotions; where ideas are as archaic as the gypsum dust in Death Valley; where the surface of the images, whether muted or gleaming, is suspectly fine. The complexities of an anxious society are reduced to crude embellishments unendowed with either irony or pity. Antonioni is a fraud.

Antonioni has himself said something about his intentions in an interview with an American journalist, Guy Flatley:

'I wasn't trying to explain America—a film is not a social analysis after all. I was trying to feel something about the country, to gain an intuition . . . my film touches on just a few themes, a few places. Somebody can say this is missing, or that is missing. Well, of course it is. The story is certainly a simple one. None the less, the content is actually very complex. It is not so much a question of reading between the lines, as of reading between the images.'

A question, in fact, of looking. One may take an example of the thematic richness of the imagery which runs through the film. The real-estate man for whom Daria, the heroine (Daria Halprin), works is supervising a scheme to convert part of the desert into a luxury holiday ground, Sunny Dunes. We see him at work in his penthouse office with his colleagues, viewing a commercial for the reclaimed land, which is peopled by pleasure-busy plastic dummies, playing golf, gardening, cooking. In the advertisement, water, the source of wealth and the magic by which the desert will be transformed, drips and sprays. The businessmen watch the advertisement with intentness. It is the projection of what is still a fantasy since its realisation depends on capital investment.

Meanwhile down in the streets Mark, the hero, buys a gun, joins in a university rebellion, fails to shoot a policeman, is refused a sandwich in a delicatessen because he cannot pay for it. He moves through a chaos of commerce: the billboards with their fantasy promises, blow-ups of enforced dreams, surround him. The pressures on him either towards violence or inertia are everywhere 'between the images'. He steals a plane, flies through the smog-encircled city out into the pure air of the desert and proceeds to flirt with Daria, who is speeding in an old car to meet her boss. The low and the high, car and plane, earthbound and air-free meet in a beautiful, comic, urgent courtship.

When they arrive at the panorama above Zabriskie Point they are at first a little wary of each other—they talk disjointedly and self-consciously of their past lives. This is in fact the most naturalistic scene in the film—it is quite real that they should address each other in tentative, self-regarding phrases—though it must be said that Mark Frechette, who plays Mark, does not have sufficient histrionic range in some other scenes to suggest more than sullen wilfulness or disappointment.

After their exchanges on the Point, Mark hurtles down an immense cleft and lies for a moment flirtatiously miming death on the dusty ground. Daria reaches him and they are at ease with each other. They talk across the immense deserted places, at the bottom of a canyon—way below street-level, as it were. Before they start to make love, Daria has smoked a little pot: she conveys the intensity of her love and abandon-

ment by every gesture of hand, mouth, and especially eye. One may see clearly the effects of her happiness and of the drug working simultaneously. Mark and Daria lie diagonally across the frame. The camera cuts to the top of a hill and tilts down slowly, glamorously, revealing a long dried up river bed in crystal clear detail. It halts to show us for a second Mark and Daria covered in dust, Pompeian lovers frozen by the accidents of nature. There follows a scene in which groups of two, three and four make love in the valley. This is, most pointedly, intercut with the real love-making of Daria and Mark: we are in no doubt that the other lovers are a fantasy of Daria's. This is her vision of how the desert might best be inhabited, in direct contrast to the business dream of the commercial earlier.

So to the final sequence, after Daria has heard of Mark's death at the hands of the police when he has flown the plane back to Los Angeles.

She is tranced with grief (the only time in the film when she reminds us of Monica Vitti in the earlier Antonioni films). She arrives at the mountain penthouse where she is to meet her boss. There are a few smart women sunning by the blue pool. In another room the boss (Rod Taylor) is trying to pull off a deal. The talk is of money; the businessmen's faces are reflected in the model of a marina. Daria leans against a rock down which drips the precious water. Her boss finds her, is solicitous, shepherds her down to find her room. But instead she leaves, walks away from the building down towards her car. She turns to look at the building. There is a shot of the circling balcony; in the foreground a copy of the *National Geographic Magazine* flaps on a chair, suggesting that the place is deserted. We cut back to Daria outside the car, below the house. She looks at it with great intensity, and there begins the extraordinary ballet of explosions. Again there is no suggestion that this is anything but Daria's fantasy, for at the end she climbs back into her car and drives down the hill, away, while a vast sun sets on the desert horizon and the soundtrack howls with galvanic music.

The metaphor of water for wealth, the play with various physical levels, the indications of a subjective imagination at work, are all firmly handled, but with such artistry that they are never obtrusive. The more you search for a message, the more obstinately will the structure and the poetry of the film elude you.

The sympathetic—I would say the understanding—reviews of *Zabriskie Point* have seen first, that the film is not a parable, but a vision. That it is not an illustrated catalogue of concepts, but a movie of wonderfully related intimations. As Antonioni says, it is a simple story but the content is very complex. For example Daria is consistently searching: we first see her asking about a book she has left on the roof of her office building; she goes to the desert in search of a teacher whom she fails to find; when she finds love she celebrates it both with her body and her imagination. When she loses love, she sees the world that has stolen it from her as destroyed. It is not though, because she drives on. To reverse the thesis of the psychedelic Beatles song: *Everything* is real.

The hostility of many professional film viewers is more understandable than I have allowed. Most of them, educated in a largely verbal culture but in love with the freedom of visual imagery, balk at a film which embraces ideas but suggests that its two chief characters have no time for intelligent or sensitive discussion of these ideas. The extreme beauty of the surface of the film—the colour and the processing, the composition within the frame, the rhythm of the editing—are all further evidence to them of corruption. The 'reality trip', which Mark claims to be on, looks to them like escape. They will accept the simplicities of *Easy Rider*, the narrative passion of *Z*, the irony and charm of *Alice's Restaurant*, the honesty of *Medium Cool*, because each of them is a polemical film in one way or another; and *Zabriskie Point* is offensive precisely because it is not polemical and yet suspect because it is intelligent and beautiful. It is poetry—that is the gathering together and shaping of carefully selected images to convey a unity of thought and feeling. It is not intended to be a prophetic film, but I suspect it will prove revolutionary in the history of the cinema.

# CALIFORNIA



## DREAMIN'

Axel  
Madsen

**L**UCAS, TRUMBULL, Hopper and Rush are not necessarily the staid solicitors their names suggest. Up San Francisco way George Lucas' *THX 1138*, a movie with an unwieldy title perhaps but a high IQ, will be the first film from Francis Ford Coppola's American Zoetrope studio. Down south, Douglas Trumbull is preparing to take up where *2001* left off (he *should* know; he invented those heavy lights at the end of Kubrick's fable); while in other new films, Dennis Hopper takes on that formidable Godardian axiom of film being truth 24 times a second, and Richard Rush breaks through with a movie which says that you can't drop back in society.

The first to admit that his period of grace as hip movie mogul is running out is Coppola himself. Trade press, Sunday supplements, slick, underground and buff magazines have reported enthusiastically on his set-up in Folsom Street, described the three crayon-coloured floors of the converted warehouse, explained the Zoetrope credo (life and movement, of course), and admired Coppola's formidable powers of persuasion which have secured Warner Brothers' backing for this freebooters' sanctuary. For over a year now, a dozen young film-makers have toiled on

promising, low-budget movies at American Zoetrope, and another batch gets under way soon. This fall, George Lucas' film, now in rough-cut, reaches the screen for AZ's first showdown.

As the title implies, *THX 1138* (or Thex, as Lucas calls it) is vaguely futuristic—vaguely in the sense that its Flash Gordon theme is giving our world only a slight futuristic twist, the kind of computer-deduced turn of the screw California think-tank scientists hypothesise about. 'I really believe in the concept of living the future now,' Lucas says. '1984 is already here and we kind of enjoy it. We're living it here and now—TV and drug soporifics are here. The idea of the film is that we live in a cage with an open door and that most of us probably just don't want to leave. THX is a guy who just leaves.'

Co-starring Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasence and San Francisco actress Maggie McOmill in all-shaven splendour, *THX 1138* is a deceptively rich film. Despite its loose plot, it contains what must rate as one of the most complex soundtracks (the threats in Lucas' Alphaville are auditory), while the austere, clean visuals rely heavily on graphics. Lucas' 1984 society lives totally underground. Men and women

have clean-shaven heads and are perpetually high on a soothing drug. The police are metallic-faced robots totally without malice. 'When THX locks himself into a computer tape room to try to find his woman, the robots break down the door with cries of "Don't worry, we'll get you out of there!" Like the Los Angeles Police Department motto—"to serve and to protect"—there is never any overt threat. Also, the film is a personal drama: nothing is really solved.'

Lucas' next picture is *Apocalypse Now*, a film about the Vietnam war which he will start this summer, although some of it is already being filmed—surreptitiously, by friendly television crews in the war zone. The story, by John Milius, calls for footage of combat involving helicopter gunships of a kind that would never get US Army co-operation. 'It's a very strange story about an Army colonel who is an insane surfer and takes a post in Vietnam because the waves are breaking right,' says Coppola. Lucas adds that the film will look like *M\*A\*S\*H* and *War Games*, except that like a document on war it will have big holes in it and will not try, like a traditional war movie, to engineer a neat plot line with no parts of the action missing.



FILM EQUIPMENT OF "THE LAST MOVIE"

Warners are enthusiastic about *Apocalypse Now* and would like to get it into early production. On American Zoetrope's list, however, it is not the first project to go. Coppola is excited about *Santa Rita*, to be made by Steve Wax. *Santa Rita* is a World War II detention camp in Northern California which was reactivated during the 1969 People's Park riots in Berkeley, when several hundred leftist activists were held there. 'It's really Kafka and Dr. Strangelove,' says Coppola. Also on the AZ schedule are *Vesuvia*, about a young man who returns home from a foreign war and regresses into fantasy, *Have We Seen the Elephant*, John Korty's fourth feature, *Night Ride Down*, a movie about the Los Angeles pornographic magazine industry to be directed by Willard Huyck, and Coppola's own *The Conversation*, a story of privacy and eavesdropping.

Expanded cinema, synenergy, noosphere: the genuflections to tomorrow's media are easily executed, but they are already accompanied by a yawn, and a few years have sufficed to dull the first shockwaves of audio-visual breakthroughs. Lacking ideas, the new media men practise deliberate assault, and Osaka Expo electronics are reviewed in tired, *déjà vu* vocabulary. While expanded cinema enthusiasts dig up Teilhard de Chardin and his noosphere (that belt of organised intelligence that supposedly girdles our planet) in support for a new scorched earth policy, attempts to divorce light shows from rock music prove financial disaster for kinetic artists.

Out in Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, however, where Rocketdyne's test stands blend with aerospace tool

shops, a 34-year-old special effects specialist is patiently separating cybernetic wheat from electronic chaff. 'We're not the normal kind of revolutionaries,' says Douglas Trumbull.

Effects have been Trumbull's world since his days as technical illustrator and freelance artist in the Los Angeles aerospace industry. It was while creating space animation for Graphic Films, a NASA sub-contractor, that he met Con Pederson, the company's art director. After Kubrick saw some of Graphic's work, Pederson and Trumbull were the two men sent to England to create all those mind-blowing effects on *2001*. The assignment turned out to be nearly a two-year job, but at the end they came up with what Trumbull says would have been the 'payoff' of the whole film.

'The original script called for actual extra-terrestrials—"beings" formed out of light, energy or just pulsating whatever—to be there in the room with Keir Dullea,' says Trumbull. 'Right at the end we got into some fantastically good things which didn't get into the picture because they still required a lot of opticals. Essentially, this was a sophisticated expansion of the splitscan technique—the splitscan was what you saw travelling down those corridors of light.'

Generating totally electronic images inside a cathode ray tube is not entirely new, as shown by UCLA student Peter Kamnitzer's short *Cityscape* (made with NASA and General Electric computers). But Trumbull's process uses photographic means to generate three-dimensional, semi-solid structures that a camera can travel within or fly over. 'This way, you can generate a whole city of light, buildings, columns or cubes in full dimensions—in all dimensions, since there may not even be a

ground-plane. You could see light forms travelling in giant streams of energy. It's a whole different concept, like seeing an electronic herd of buffalo.'

Before starting *Running Silent*, his first feature for Universal, Trumbull is doing the special effects for Robert Wise's *The Andromeda Strain*, a science fiction film which he describes as 'updated Godzilla'. The outer-space threat here is a strain of organism which would destroy living matter on earth; and to make it truly extra-terrestrial, Trumbull has taken blocks of hexagons, set them up on a gear head allowing continuous pitch and yaw motion, surrounded them with mirrors, and hooked the whole thing to a computer. By filming the movements of the hexagons with an open shutter, the mirrors throw back hexagonal multiplications which the computer records, allowing a playback in a slightly increased size. The result is that the strain will not be growing like a green monster blob, but mathematically, twittering in strange little geometrical patterns.

With Anthony Foutz, the son of Moray Foutz who was one of the original creators of the Disney empire, Trumbull is also making a film called *Saturation 70*. A 90-minute documentary, it takes a not too serious look at ecology; its star is 5-year-old Julian Jones, son of Brian Jones, the Rolling Stone who died last year. 'Basically, it's an attempt at bringing visuals up to date,' Foutz says. 'We work on four levels, or grids: the storyline, which is a fable; Doug's special effects; data inserts, and music and sound slightly distorted by synthesizer. There are 65 principal effects, ranging from a tower of Babel which actually is a conglomeration of oil derricks to video clouds and multiple sunsets.'

'For little Julian, billboards are part of the environment, not something to point fingers at like Antonioni,' says Foutz. Trumbull adds that Antonioni asked him to do special effects for *Zabriskie Point*. 'At the end, Antonioni at one point didn't want to blow up just the house and the refrigerator, but the whole of America.'

Dennis Hopper's new film is about films and their deceptions. About other things too, like movie-making in primitive societies, and John Wayne going around making a living committing violence on the screen. *The Last Movie*, which a clean-shaven, trimmed down and surprisingly young-looking Hopper is editing this summer, tells the story of a Hollywood company invading virgin locations in Latin America to make a violent Western. The film people (Samuel Fuller plays the director) leave the natives their sets and a new ritual. Constructing camera, microphone booms, reflectors and sets of bamboo filigree, the Indians create a living movie whose unwitting star is Hopper, an actor-stuntman who remains behind.

He is forced to examine his life, his delusions and his dreams in a movie within a movie within the movie.

'It's strange,' says Michelle Phillips (formerly of The Mamas and The Papas) who plays Peter Fonda's girl friend in the film within the film. 'The Indians are fascinated by the bank burning and the people being shot, although not for real. When they recreate the violence with their bamboo cameras, they want to do it better. They insist that Dennis plays Billy the Kid. They make their movie and they kill him.'

Hopper retains the candour and intensity remembered by those who knew him as a teenage actor, from the days when he played Elizabeth Taylor's son in *Giant*. Hopper says that he is still an actor: if he acts in his own movies it is because he finds it easier to direct others when he is out there in front of the cameras with them. *The Last Movie*, which he and screenwriter Stewart Stern (*Rebel Without a Cause*, *Rachel, Rachel*) wrote in 1965, is inspired by Henry Hathaway's John Wayne Western of that year *The Sons of Katie Elder*, in which Hopper acted. Although Stern's script is a good one, Hopper used little of it once he got to Peru, preferring to retain its bare skeleton and to improvise. The Hollywood Western was originally little more than a pre-credit hook of perhaps four minutes, but it may run twenty in *The Last Movie's* final version. Unforeseen events and relationships which developed among Hopper's cast members found their way into the film.

*The Last Movie* questions basic film assumptions and gives away the little tricks of the trade. 'If you are going to impose this trickery that cinema is on people, you'd better have something to say. This picture has to do with how violent people react and what they think of themselves. I haven't met a bully who didn't think he was a good guy. The two levels are to show all the little stunts—the mattresses the stuntmen fall on, the ketchup—and also how primitive Indians in the Peruvian Andes react to this.'

'*The Last Movie* is much more complex, of course, than *Easy Rider*. I liked that SIGHT AND SOUND article, but I didn't say that the motorcycle riders were any better than the straights who killed them. So I'm very hung up on structure. I look for ideas, take in all I can. I formulate; I lay it out. But movies are beginning to catch up with the novel, beginning to get into the mind.'

Hopper's next will be one of three projects: *Me and Bobby McGee*, a hopeful love story of a couple hitch-hiking across America, *The Second Chance*, about two people trying to raise money for a movie, or *Revelation*, about 'a crazed artist who goes around telling people that the world is coming apart because the earth wants to become a sun and in its turn have children-earths.'

*Easy Rider* was heavily indebted to

American International Pictures and its exploitation motorcycle movies. The players, characters, terrain and plot-line had been market-tested, and it was only AIP's reservations about Hopper as a neophyte director that made producer Peter Fonda take the project to Columbia Pictures. Richard Rush is AIP's second unwitting gift to Columbia.

The director of AIP's *Hell's Angels on Wheels*, *Psych-Out* and *Savage Seven* has now made the first authentic film on campus turmoil: *Getting Straight* is a cynical, sympathetic, flip, touching and ultimately pessimistic view of the post-JFK generation, those millions a little too old for radical rhetoric and a little too young for repression. 'This is rebellion before the cause,' says Rush. 'What is happening historically is really a personal identity crisis. What I constantly hear is that kids have no answers; but they don't have to come up with structured answers, they've already won. Our hero has all the wrong answers: he wants so much to compromise, to drop back in, until that last ounce of your flesh you have to give to join.'

As film, *Getting Straight* is a triumph of the new, long-lens *mise en scène*

known professionally as 'rack focusing' or 'critical focus', which Rush traces back to Claude Lelouch if not further back to magazine photography, and which he and Laszlo Kovacs first tried in *Hell's Angels on Wheels*. (Kovacs' camerawork is another *Easy Rider* debt to AIP.) 'It's very demanding, especially on actors, but also very exciting,' Rush says. 'Blocking with long lenses forces actors to stop on millimetre-sharp cue marks, but it also allows long passages without protection coverage. Once you're into this, the traditional technique of master-shot, two-shots, over-shoulder close-ups and back to the master feels flat and dull.'

Rush, who is a week older than Godard, loves Godardian structure, 'where you are really not allowed to stumble to where the story is until the last ten minutes, when suddenly it explodes structurally.' But he feels that he is himself much more of a three-act planner, with a preference for filming from a subjective viewpoint. '*Getting Straight* is a house of cards, each scene adding, and we always see the picture through the hero: it's always his film. I love that.'



CALIFORNIA DREAMING: JULIAN JONES IN "SATURATION 70"

# The Kes Dossier



John Russell Taylor

**K**ES, OF COURSE, is a special case. But then, what film these days isn't? Its history, therefore, can do service as a representative example of the kind of problems film-makers with an off-beat property which they want to get into production may expect to meet. The story, this time, does have a happy ending in prospect. The film did get made; it got made well; and eventually it got shown.

Many other projects are not so lucky: either they don't get made; or if they do they are somehow spoilt in the execution, so that we are left wanly praising good intentions while deploring the way they have been realised; or even if they are well made, they still find themselves lying round for years, or for ever, on some dusty shelf in Wardour Street. *Kes* has the additional advantage of being, in the final analysis, a perfectly viable commercial film as well as a work of some artistic distinction. It is a

film that can be sold, and already has been sold rather effectively to its first audiences in the North. But then, even saleability is an ambiguous quality: it can be demonstrated only by being demonstrated, and is something which first of all must be believed in, otherwise it will never be put to the test. Finally the makers of *Kes* have found distributors and exhibitors to share their faith in the film, but it has been a long, tough haul, and it is not quite over yet.

The story started as long ago as 1966. At this time Tony Garnett was a producer at the BBC on the 'Wednesday Play' series, and he and Kenneth Loach had worked together on several productions there. He had a meeting with a writer he had had his eye on for a little while, Barry Hines, hoping to commission him to write a television play. But Hines, who had already written a novel

and a couple of radio plays, had just got a grant for six months writing, and refused the play commission in order to write another novel. 'It's about a falcon,' he volunteered.

Around August 1967 Garnett received a typescript of the finished novel, *A Kestrel for a Knave*. His contract with the BBC was running out and he had been looking for a way of branching out into feature film production, preferably with Loach, who by this time was editing *Poor Cow* down at Twickenham. The novel immediately excited their interest. The only trouble, naturally, was that neither of them had any money to take an option on it, which they wanted to do right away, before the book was published the following spring. What they needed, therefore, was a distributor to put up money in advance, first of all to secure an option on the property and then to go ahead with developing it.

Almost at once, unexpected circumstances seemed to produce a happy solution. Garnett was approached by Sandy Lieberman, of the CMA agency, who wanted to represent him. Garnett already had an agent, but through this contact Lieberman put him in touch with Robert H. Solo, London boss of a company called the National General Corporation, a name which meant nothing at all to Garnett. But it transpired that it was a large American conglomerate which was ready to branch out into film production and was looking for properties.

Solo was enthusiastic about the idea of *Kes*, and an agreement was made right away that National General would put up money for the option and cover the overheads, and eventually would finance the film. This was confirmed when Solo's American boss, Irving H. Levin, came over. He assured Garnett that, 'We're going to make this picture together, Tony, and we're going to make lots of pictures together.' He also, finding out that Garnett had never been to the States, insisted that he must come, at National General's expense, to get acquainted with the greatest cinema audience in the world at first hand. This in fact Garnett did just before Easter 1968. Meanwhile a script had been produced, and apparently accepted, Garnett had drawn up a budget of about 400,000 dollars, and a definite starting date had been set for the beginning of June—which was an operational necessity because of the nesting habits of kestrels.

Everything was going swimmingly, and Garnett received a letter dated May 1 1968 from Levin noting that a definite start date had been set and concluding, 'We have all faith and confidence in your being able to do an excellent job in making this a fine commercial picture.' Within a week the carpet had been pulled out from under the project. First the trouble was with the budget. National General's experts went over it and decided it was too

optimistic. (As it happens, the final cost of the film was £157,000, almost exactly what Garnett originally said it would be.) They added on another 50,000 dollars of overheads, and also insisted that Kestrel should go to a completion guarantor, who added \$50,000 more, partly by working on the assumption that impressionistic notes in the script about scenes to be improvised should be taken literally and scheduled accordingly ('You say that on this country walk he passes some cows. You'll need at least a day for that shot alone: after all you have to hire the cows, get them to the location, train them to act as you want them to . . .'), plus charges for providing the completion guarantee (which Garnett insists is unnecessary anyway for film-makers of any competence at all), making the total around 500,000 dollars. And this then struck them as too much. Result: National General immediately withdrew from the project, despite the pleadings of Robert Solo. And desperation in Kestrel Films, which had everything set up, crew hired, locations scouted, and all set to go in about six weeks.

For a fortnight things went mad. Kestrel approached just about every distributor they could think of ('We may have missed one out in our panic, but I doubt it') and were turned down by them all. Fox observed that, 'The story, alas, comes under the classification of an art house film,' and added that they were not anyway interested in small budget films unless they gave a chance to new and creative talents (whatever that might mean). But as someone on Fox's staff sadly observed, the company had often spent as much on merely developing a script as Kestrel proposed to spend on the whole film. The other major Hollywood companies took much the same line, which, as Garnett says, is fair enough: 'After all, having been on the other side with the 'Wednesday Play' I know that finally it comes down to your own judgment, to whether you think this is the sort of thing you want to do, whether it fits into your programme, simply whether you like it or not.'

To make matters worse, it was the time of the Cannes Festival, so all the money in films was sunning itself on the beaches, and, since this was May 1968, was doing so completely incommunicado as the *événements* included a telephone and postal strike. At home in London they saw John Terry, who was sympathetic but had no money to offer from the NFFC, or anyway not nearly enough. They also saw Nat Cohen, who had backed *Poor Cow*. He obviously did not find the subject much to his taste, but agreed to help if a three-way deal could be set up for him, the NFFC and National General. But National General remained resolute.

Then again, help came from an entirely unexpected quarter. Tony Richardson had been making friendly

noises to Loach for some time about the possibility that he might work for Woodfall. They happened to meet during this fraught period, and Loach mentioned gloomily to Richardson that he would like to make a small black-and-white film. Richardson said he did not see why not, if it didn't cost too much, and asked if Loach had anything specific in mind. Loach told him about *Kes*, Richardson liked the idea and telephoned United Artists (who had already turned it down). More or less on Richardson's say-so and the budget UA accepted the project as it stood. This is why the film is given on the credits as a Woodfall Film: in fact it had no more connection with Woodfall than Richardson's vital personal intervention, and Garnett and Loach note gratefully that they were left completely to their own devices during shooting, by UA, Woodfall and everybody else. In fact, says Loach, nobody visited them at all, possibly because of the unappealing locations: the lesson seems to be that if you want a minimum of front-office interference, shoot in Barnsley.

The film had a tight eight-week shooting schedule, and kept to it. Loach had finished cutting it and had the soundtrack mixed by about February 1969, but further trouble over the colour (they had to run to seven or eight answer-prints before they were satisfied) held up formal delivery of the film to United Artists till the summer. Which, as far as the direct involvement of Garnett and Loach is concerned, was the end of the matter: from there on what happens to a film—if anything—is entirely between the distributors and the exhibitors. To keep things even further at a distance, Garnett and Loach

felt that they had got off on the wrong foot with the man then in charge at United Artists, and hesitated to keep bothering them for progress reports. Word did come through, though, that Rank, UA's normal release channel, were 'not exactly ecstatic' about the film. But things began to look up for them with the development of a new relationship between UA and ABC ('at the moment UA's hand is on ABC's knee' says Garnett, mind-bogglingly) which has resulted in ABC putting out *Women in Love* and now *Kes*.

Even so, the approaches to a regular release for *Kes* remain tentative and experimental. Its opening in London was delayed for three months after its first showings in the North (whether this was a bright promotional idea or an act of some desperation Garnett and Loach do not know), and probably the film's considerable success there has played an important part in guaranteeing it a West End showing. The choice of the Academy for its first London run naturally pleases Garnett and Loach, and is an accolade which should guarantee the film an appreciative audience right away. But of course it also tends rather to confirm the image of *Kes* as an art-house film for minority audiences only—which it was certainly not meant to be and surely does not need to be.

It is four years after the first stirrings of the idea, three since the decision to make the film if at all possible was taken, two since shooting began, one since the film was delivered to its distributors. As of now, for all its vicissitudes, it has done better than many, many projects which never managed to get off the drawing-board. But, given the qualities and the potential of this particular film, it does seem a cockeyed way to run a business.



DAVID BRADLEY IN "KES"



"BRONCO BULLFROG": AROUND ANGEL LANE

# around angel lane

David Robinson

**W**ITH THE INDUSTRY at large aiming to depress film costs to a million dollar average, it is still encouraging when a couple of young men can go out and bring in a really good feature film for around £17,000. *Around Angel Lane* (formerly, and perhaps preferably, *Bronco Bullfrog* but renamed by its distributors, British Lion\*) may be no *Easy Rider*, and is unlikely to make anyone a vast fortune: it is still one of the most original and attractive British films in years.

The director, Barney Platts-Mills, is twenty-five, tall, distinctly upper middle-class, with a pale smooth face, springy hair, tinted glasses and a disconcerting leap-frog manner of conversation. His father is a well-known barrister who was a Labour M.P. from 1945 to 1948. His family appear not to have raised any serious opposition when he decided to throw up school at 15, since they had five other children to educate and 'were probably rather relieved.' He trained to be a film editor, one of the first films he worked on as an assistant being *A Kind of Loving*. He was with Rank for five months, and then at eighteen went to television and *World in Action*. In 1966 he joined James Scott as a director of Maya Films, which Scott had formed a year or so before. A third director was Adam Barker-Mill, a cameraman. In the past four years Maya have made ten films and lost around £2,000, which is good enough to be taken as breaking even.

Of the shorts he has directed during this period Platts-Mills values most *St. Christopher* and *Everybody's An Actor*, *Shakespeare Said*. *St. Christopher* was made with the facilities and students of the Bath Academy of Arts, where James

\* Since this article was written, the title has been changed again—back to the original, *Bronco Bullfrog*.

Scott was then teaching. After the Bath people realised this, Scott found himself freer to devote his time to Maya. The film is about mentally handicapped children and grown-ups; and like *Everybody's An Actor* reveals Platts-Mills' keen eye for human detail, enormously generous and unpatronising view of his fellow-men, and almost chronic failure of structural sense.

*Everybody's An Actor* was shot in Stratford E., and set out to be an account of Joan Littlewood's work in improvisational drama with the local youngsters. It was made under some difficulties. The boys started out by seizing vital parts of the film-makers' equipment in the cause of a rather weedy protection racket (half-a-crown a time). The crew none the less won their confidence and interest, though ultimately the whole place was broken up. The result is a little messy (perversely anti-structural again) but enormously likeable. The boys progress from giggly self-consciousness to total absorption in their improvised sketches (scenes of family life; racism in the Stratford streets; the richest man in the world buying the Hilton). Between times there are casual conversations among themselves and with Joan Littlewood, and impressions of their daily working lives.

Meanwhile Platts-Mills and Andrew St. John (now 22, he had already done a stint in Fox's Xerox department and started his own production company) toyed with the idea of a feature on 'a middle-class theme' and had more or less managed to finance it at £80,000, twenty-five per cent of which they had borrowed from the bank—thanks, as they acknowledge, to possessing rich relatives. For various reasons the middle-class project fell through, and they turned to an idea of making a story film with some of the youngsters from *Everybody's An Actor*, who had kept on nagging to know when they were going to make 'a proper film'. In January 1969 they wrote the script of *Bronco Bullfrog* and decided to shoot it with the £20,000 advanced by the bank for the other film.

A week before they were due to shoot, Bryan Forbes read the script and showed an interest in the idea. He had already intimated that the casting would have to be changed, and suggested some other radical changes, when he saw *Everybody's An Actor*. 'This was the most humiliating experience of my life,' St. John recalls. 'We waited in the hall of the studios; then Forbes descended the stairway flanked and followed by a cortège of maybe eight minions; and we all trooped along to the only remote place in the studio where 16 mm could be shown. After the screening one of the studio men turned around to me and said, "I suppose it's sort of *cinéma vérité* gone wrong . . ." Forbes' own comment was "I could do better with my children on the lawn." And that was the end of the interest in the idea.' (After *Bronco Bullfrog* was finished Forbes declined to see it, writing, 'Everybody wants a personal reaction . . . I just haven't the time at the moment.')

ABOVE AND BELOW: SCENES FROM "BRONCO BULLFROG".



The film was shot in 6 weeks, entirely on location, mostly in and around Stratford. The casting started from the boys who had appeared in *Everybody's An Actor* and took in various of their relations and acquaintances. Del Walker, the hero, was a boy with a rather sullen, nervy face who had not said a word for weeks in the Littlewood sessions but quite suddenly burst into life. The only one imported from outside Stratford was the heroine, a languidly beautiful girl of fifteen who works Saturday mornings for Platts-Mills' newsagent in Parsons Green. The stalwarts of the film were the Shepherd family. Sam Shepherd plays Bronco Bullfrog, an accomplished thief with the cachet of a Borstal term; his brother Chrissie plays one of Del's gang; and as the heroine's shrew mother Mrs. Shepherd shames any known British character actress.

Sometimes the casting was quite accidental. The script included a scene in which Del visits his aunt in the country. The lady chosen for the role took her husband along since it was a nice day; and it quickly became evident that he had more aptitude than she did herself. They sat her in the sun and changed the aunt into an uncle.

The script was based on various experiences the boys had related to them, and in particular an occasion when Del had run away from home and come to Platts-Mills' house. In the story Del is a moderate delinquent—not really vicious, but uncertain and with nothing else to do evenings but boot people who look the wrong way at him. He falls for a fifteen-year-old girl; and faced with the opposition of his own father and her mother (her dad is doing time), they go off together, with little positive deliberation and in face of the intolerable odds presented by police and parents and the

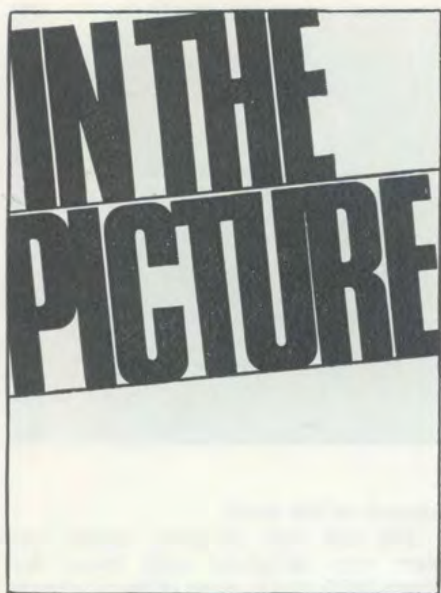


hazards of life itself.

The cast were all given scripts, and were very delighted with them; but Platts-Mills thinks none of them actually read them. The film was improvised scene by scene with the director indicating the lines of the action or the dialogue and recalling actual or acted incidents which would provide a basis for working. The result is extraordinary, an entirely consistent acting style which achieves the difficult feat of using the players' own gaucheness and inarticulateness to express deliberately and artistically the gaucheness and inarticulateness of the characters.

Moderately disciplined by a narrative line, Platts-Mills' structural casualness becomes a positive and attractive quality. Del's adventures take their arbitrary character from his directionless life, but there nevertheless appears to be an inner impulse (fate perhaps?) to move the film along. Platts-Mills explains his ability to win the confidence and sustained interest of his actors: 'I've known them a long time now, and anyway, I left school at fifteen too, and I'm more like them than I am like most of the other people I meet.' If this is a patently romantic idea, at least he shows supremely the ability to understand and sympathise with both characters and actors at their own terms, to enjoy their comedy and oddity and moral frailties at their proper level, without any kind of patronage or detachment.

The film is above all very funny. There is a moment of high comedy in Del's first encounter, laboriously brought about, with the girl and her mate in a caff. They glower embarrassedly at each other without a word until the girls announce—after a couple of minutes and the refusal of a cup of tea—that they must be going. A later encounter between hero and heroine where they struggle through a rubbish site to a private place in order to exchange one quick peck before embarking on the return journey, is as comic, but also very touching. The strength of the film is that its high quality of observation is human, not anthropological.



### 'Gather ye Rosebud . . .'

IN APPROPRIATELY infernal heat, the end of the world had come: we were in the last scene of *Citizen Kane*, with the shades of Louis B. Mayer, Irving Thalberg and Cedric Gibbons hovering over the treasures and detritus of a lost world. The May auction of the M-G-M wardrobe, furniture and props was a desolate occasion which even the merciless brightness of the purchasers' press releases could not obscure. 'I've just been ordered off sound stage 27 because I haven't got the right identification tag,' I heard Adolph Green say. It seemed only appropriate that sound stage 27—scene of the auction itself—was where his and Betty Comden's captivating musical *Bandwagon* (and other Minnelli musicals including *An American in Paris*) had been shot.

The auction figures, super-colossal and daunting, were quoted behind me as I sat under a *Madame Bovary* chandelier bought by set decorator Hugh Hunt from an Australian miner who had struck it rich at Broken Hill. Six thousand registered bidders, 20,000 catalogued items—supplied in fat bound lists decorated with mournful M-G-M lions—and 150,000 square feet crammed with junk. Bidding had an hysterical edge: a perfectly ordinary cut crystal decanter, which had the distinction of being Number One on the list, and had presumably done service in every M-G-M 'British' flag-waver from *Goodbye Mr. Chips* to *The Forsyte Saga*, went for 100 dollars. Several obviously imitation antique chairs went for Christie prices just because Greer Garson may or may not have planted an elegant bustle in them, some of the clocks which chimed through *Marie Antoinette* or *Madame Curie* had no hands, and most of the items looked more than a trifle unappetising: shabby tacked-together *fin de siècle* lacquered black chairs with striped seats from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* only served to emphasise the cosmetic gifts of Harry Stradling's photography of the picture. Stripped of the glowing lighting of stalwarts like Joseph Ruttenberg, Harold Rosson, George Folsey and Oliver T. Marsh, the endless tables, lamps and screens gave off (despite some magnificent single items, most notably from Hans Peters' sets for *Diane*) an unsettling odour of decay.

The costumes, too, looked forlorn, as mournful and dead as waxworks' clothes, reminding one poignantly of the tininess of

so many vanished stars. Miss Garbo is said to have entered this territory of death late one night; it's easy to imagine her fingering the costume she wore at the races in *Anna Karenina*, remembering, remembering. . . Once again, the most splendid costumes came from *Diane*: studded with gems, trimmed with miniver, in royal blue and crimson and pale dove grey, they reminded one pleasantly of the most opulent of films *maudits*, an exquisite recreation of the life of Diane de Poitiers, flawed only by the casting of Lana Turner in the central role. (Christopher Isherwood's intelligent screenplay was one of the very few he wrote which reached filming intact.)

'What the hell, or who the hell, was *Diane*?' I heard a vulpine woman saying as, ignoring the printed 'do not touch' rules, she rummaged through the folds of Francis II's cloak. Hunger, rather than nostalgia, ruled on the days I went, and several people were fiercely looking for things they remembered from favourite pictures. One man was distractedly seeking the alembic which contained the bubbling chemical milk-shake that changed Spencer Tracy's Jekyll into Hyde. Another wanted the spider-bottle over which Karloff sinisterly brooded in *The Mask of Fu Manchu*. David Bradley, collector and film-maker, was hard in pursuit of the figure of Bakst, the Egyptian cat god which settled the fortunes of Dorian Gray in Albert Lewin's picture (a couch

which appeared in Dorian's drawing-room went for a mere 35 dollars because a negligent catalogue mentioned only its *reappearance*—in *Executive Suite*). Unhelpfully, hundreds of items were unmatched to the films they came from, simply because a hard-pressed Hugh Hunt, sadly the only survivor of the M-G-M art department team, couldn't remember them all.

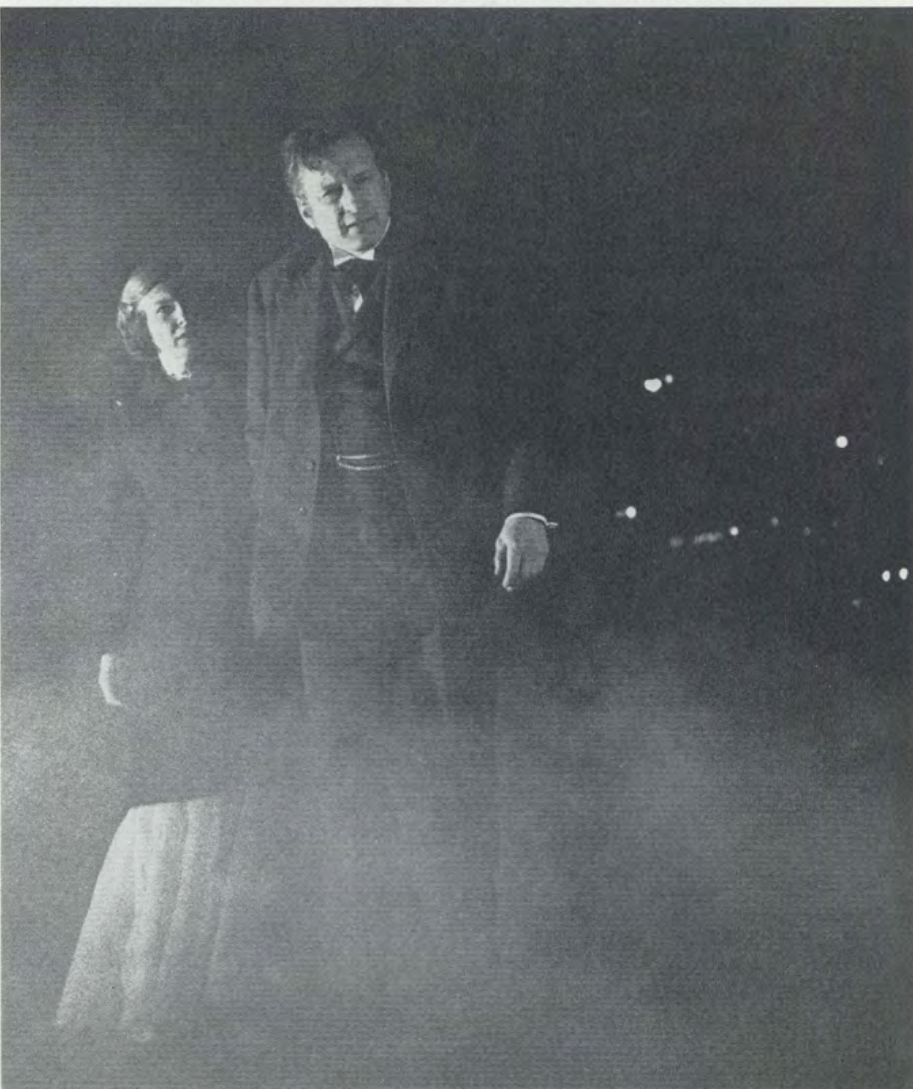
As the auction wore on, it changed from the sublime (a Louis XIV table from *Marie Antoinette* with the Sun King and his handmaidens like a gilded planet with painted satellites) to the stupefying or pathetic—endless anchors and ropes and chains, Clark Gable's Burberry and Judy Garland's shoes, and, if you were really a glutton for punishment, a bed of nails (from *Kim*). You could rig up a sailing ship, furnish a palace, or stage a massive fancy dress *soirée* from the wreckage at Culver City. But you couldn't bring back the world that got away.

CHARLES HIGHAM

### Cavalcanti in Paris

ON A BRIEF VISIT to Paris during the May 1968 troubles, Norman McLaren was asked by a journalist if he knew what had become of his teacher and colleague in the old GPO film unit, Alberto Cavalcanti. McLaren shook his head. 'The last I heard, he was somewhere in Eastern Europe.' Cavalcanti, as it happened, was right there in Paris, and

JOANNE WOODWARD AND GEORGE C. SCOTT IN "THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS". ANTHONY HARVEY'S NEW FILM FROM THE PLAY BY JAMES GOLDMAN. PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK STAGER.



had been for several months, after a year teaching at University College of Los Angeles. The fact that neither McLaren nor the journalist knew this was symptomatic of the way Cavalcanti had slipped out of sight after having directed, in the fat years of the British film industry, such features as *Champagne Charlie*, *Went the Day Well*, *Dead of Night* (two episodes), *Nicholas Nickleby* and *They Made Me a Fugitive*. These days the 73-year-old Cavalcanti lives in an underheated walk-up flat a stone's throw from Pigalle and works for French state television—'officially,' he adds, smiling wryly.

Apart from a children's film for Halas and Batchelor in 1960, Cavalcanti has not directed a full-length feature since *La Prima Notte* in 1958. He scripted another feature, *Yerma*, in 1962, but production was abandoned and he turned the script into a play that had some success in Spain. He also went back to stage directing, a craft he had exercised in Paris in the 1920s. But primarily a man of the cinema, he welcomed the chance to go to Israel in 1967 to direct an hour-long documentary, *Thus Spake Theodor Herzl*. The Sixties, a time of experiment and opportunity for so many other film-makers, had proved to be a bleak decade.

'I am very sad to be left out of the present movement,' he told me recently, 'because I think that although there has been a marvellous opening up of subject matter in the last few years, much more freedom, films have remained stationary on the technical side.' Film technique obsesses him. 'I am interested in finding the right kind of technique for TV as opposed to film. I don't think it's the same sort of thing at all.' Why, with his experience, has he been so neglected by the film industry? 'Partly because my generation is a bit out of fashion.' The idea seems to amuse him. Despite, however, the occasional flash of humour when he talks of his career difficulties, the wounds are obviously there.

The critical year was 1950. 'I had a great disappointment with Rank. I had an option on Charles Morgan's *Sparkenbroke*, but they decided the film would be above the heads of the public. That sort of thing has been a recurrent phenomenon in my career.' Cavalcanti returned to lecture in his native Brazil, after thirty-five years absence, and was offered the job of head of production for the Vera Cruz company of Sao Paulo. He accepted, intending not to direct but to organise production units and train new directors. 'It only lasted one year. I was thrown out.' He had become a target of American film interests, which did not relish having their grip on the Brazilian market broken by a native industry.

'The Americans controlled the film stock, and all the time I was there they wouldn't sell me a single foot. I had to buy it all on the black market. I also know that the Americans intervened at official level and claimed I was a Communist. Now like a lot of intellectuals of my generation I am what I like to call a progressive, but I have never been a member of the Communist Party.' His stay in Brazil, which lasted until the mid-Fifties, seems to have been the most unhappy period of his career. 'It was tragic,' he says. It did, however, result in two Cavalcanti films: *Canto do Mar*, which won a first prize at Karlovy Vary, and *Simão o Caolho*, a political satire that has never been screened in Europe.

He returned to Europe, almost penniless, on the strength of a phone call from Joris Ivens. 'Joris had an offer to direct Brecht's *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* but he



ALBERTO CAVALCANTI.

didn't want to work with professional actors. I was glad of the opportunity, although I think learning how to deal with actors would have been good for Joris. When he came to direct *Till Eulenspiegel* with Gérard Philipe, Philipe virtually took over the direction and ruined the film.' Cavalcanti worked with Brecht on the script and shot the film in Austria. 'I was terrified of Brecht. He had given Pabst and Lang absolute hell. But we got on very well together and he was pleased by the final result.'

Cavalcanti then considered returning to England, but 'You can't go back again.' And one refrains from asking why, in that case, he lives in France, where his film career began. There is no doubting the warmth of his English memories. He talks appreciatively of the team spirit of Ealing under Balcon, of the intelligence and professionalism of English actors, and of directors whose careers he fostered, like Len Lye ('my favourite student'), Humphrey Jennings and Robert Hamer. He makes a passing, sombre reference to Hamer's alcoholism and agrees that *It Always Rains on Sunday* was a better film than *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

Of his own films, he has a fondness for *Went the Day Well*, partly for its anti-folklore quality. 'You have this apparently idyllic village, but as soon as war comes the villagers become absolute monsters.' A compulsive script reviser, he used very little of Graham Greene's original screenplay for the film, a fact he suspects upset Greene.

About *They Made Me a Fugitive*, which lingers in memory as one of the most darkly poetic of all crime films, Cavalcanti says: 'It turns up now and again on American TV. They cut out all the violence and also destroyed the negative. There's a collector somewhere who is said to have a complete copy and I'm trying to get in touch with him.'

On the subject of documentaries, he says: 'I've always been against the word "documentary". It doesn't sound artistic. It smells of dust and old papers.' A mischievous note comes into his voice: 'John Grierson had a genius for two things: spotting talent and thinking up film titles.'

He comments in a similar vein on Brecht's taste in women's looks, the difficulties of directing Martine Carol in *La Prima Notte*, Orson Welles in a Roman restaurant

comporting himself like Charles Foster Kane, and the extraordinary difference between the talents of the late Françoise Dorléac and her sister, Catherine Deneuve. ('She has a silent film technique. We've moved on since then.') His voice changes again as he recalls how Falconetti, whom he had directed on the Paris stage before Dreyer cast her as Joan of Arc, later told him that Dreyer had destroyed her as an actress. 'He was cruel, that man. He used to make her come into the studio at five in the morning and kneel down on the concrete floor until she was in a state of complete hysteria.'

The conversation returns to the present. How does he feel about Cinema Novo directors like Glauber Rocha? 'Glauber is a very intelligent boy and he has said some nice things about me, but I hate his optic of Brazil. It's so baroque. I can't bear *Antonio das Mortes*. You know, those people in North Eastern Brazil, they're not like that at all. It's a country of defeatedness and despair, not melodrama.'

And his own projects? 'I have a script that I very much want to do by the Polish writer Lazar Kobrynski. I'd like to shoot it in Israel. It's about Noah, who's the only character in the film apart from a horde of extras who come on in the last five minutes. Michel Simon has agreed to play Noah and Darius Milhaud will write the music. The only problem now is to get the backing.'

GEOFFREY MINISH

## Thinking Big

SERGEI BONDARCHUK, with his moustache and pipe, looked rather like a quiet-mannered gentleman farmer as he relaxed in his London hotel, keeping one eye on the television set as we talked. He was in town to supervise the English dubbing of *Waterloo*, the 28 million dollar Dino De Laurentiis-Mosfilm co-production which he shot in Italy and Russia. He began as an actor in the late 1940s (his best roles include *Taras Shevchenko* by Savchenko and *Othello* in Yutkevich's version), but always had a secret ambition to direct. 'I met the usual opposition from studios and committees—he's an actor, why does he want to change, they said.' Nevertheless, by dint of pushing and arguing, he managed in 1959 to take charge of a favourite project, Sholokhov's *Destiny of a Man*, and this virtually made his name.

*War and Peace* had always been 'a rosy dream'. He had met King Vidor and got on very well with him (Vidor's adaptation of Tolstoy was of course a great hit in the U.S.S.R.); but Bondarchuk felt there was room for another version utilising a longer time span and the kind of resources only available in his own country. The difficulties of shooting on 70 mm. proved enormous, however; they discovered the film stock had very low sensitivity and had to re-shoot several key scenes. The cameras were big and cumbersome. During the five year stint, 'the actors got noticeably older and so did I.' But Bondarchuk obviously thrives on challenges, and recounted with relish how they took two months to prepare the burning of Moscow sequence which lasts 15 minutes on the screen—a somewhat dangerous operation, in the event, as one of the operators was temporarily set on fire as he zoomed through the flames. 'Another trouble was that Russian extras tend to be lazy. Before this sequence, we had to send assistants round to wake up sleeping extras in dark corners of the set, otherwise they would have been burnt to death.'

I mentioned his passion for elaborate,

gliding camera movements and aerial views, and he said he was particularly proud of a shot in the ballroom scene where the operator followed the dancers round on roller skates and then sat on a crane for a high angle shot. 'For me, helicopter panoramas give a feeling of a microcosm of the world—a Tolstoyan view, if you like. But the cameraman does it—I don't like flying myself.'

On *Waterloo*, he had the problem of working with an international group of artists and technicians (Rod Steiger as a pain-racked Napoleon and Christopher Plummer as Wellington head the cast). His own English is limited, but everyone helped each other linguistically. For the vast battle scenes in the Ukraine they utilised the Soviet Army—they were trained in the 1815 manual of arms long before filming began. Bondarchuk is obviously keen on military statistics and accuracy, although he added with a smile, 'There is historical truth and artistic truth.' The confinement of the fighting to two square miles at Waterloo meant that it was necessary to give a very precise account of what happened, and he has given special emphasis to the aftermath: the field of the dead sequence has 18,000 soldiers playing corpses, plus hundreds of drugged horses. Three generals commanded the Army forces, including one who had taken part in *Shchors* (Bondarchuk, like Dovzhenko, comes from the Ukraine).

What about future plans? 'I am going to take a rest and am considering a suggestion by U Thant to make a feature for the 25th anniversary of the United Nations. . . And I would also like to do *Boris Godunov*.'

JOHN GILLET

## See You at Mao

HERE, FINALLY, was Jean-Luc Godard. Twice in three years he had failed to show up for lectures at the University of Wisconsin in Madison; 'Waiting for Godard' had become a joke. From his films and the tales about his personal behaviour, one expected someone quite different from this shy, almost withdrawn, man bunched up in a student union chair, talking in a soft voice

as he puffed on a fat yellow Boyard. Hardly anyone recognised him.

Godard was making a brief U.S. college tour to soak the militant rich for the cost of a film—*Till Victory*—which he has been making with the El Fatah in Jordan. He makes it difficult for the unconverted by refusing to talk about movies, only about politics. When I met him, though, I innocently tried to draw him out on his future projects. He turned away and stared into space. What about his American movie, *One American Movie*? 'A dead corpse,' interjected Jean-Pierre Gorin, a young former factory worker. The director now signs his films as by Jean-Luc Godard and 'comrades of the Dziga-Vertov group,' which means Gorin; eventually, Godard's name as well will disappear from the credits. 'It's unfinished,' Godard added. 'It will never be finished. It's bad . . .' The Grove Press representative who was jockeying Godard around on the tour explained later that filming real Black Panthers had made Godard feel pretentious. And *East Wind*, the Maoist Western written with Danny Cohn-Bendit? 'It's been done for a year,' Godard said. When will it be shown in America? He shrugged and resumed a *sub rosa* conversation in French with Gorin.

The man from Grove ticked off the films Godard has made since, after *One Plus One*, he 'stopped making films about politics and started making political films.' All are in 16 mm., in colour, and under the Dziga-Vertov banner: *A Movie Like the Others*, about the 1968 Paris disorders; *See You at Mao*, which Godard had brought along today, made for and refused by Britain's ITV; *Pravda*, a documentary of Czechoslovakia; *East Wind*; *Struggle in Italy*, made for and refused by Italy's RAI; and *One French Movie*, in the works for three years but unfinished for lack of funds.

After the Arab film—El Fatah will see the rough cut and decide how it is to be completed—Godard will make two dramatic features for Grove. *Mao*, 52 minutes long, came in for under £4,200. (The original title was *British Sounds*; Grove changed it to make the film more profitable on cam-

puses.) Godard has found his niche, apparently, but it is disconcerting to see how narrow it is. I also learned that the break with Truffaut had been both personal and ideological, and had arisen from Truffaut's refusal to stop the screening of his films during the 1968 disorders; that Godard now sees few films but hated *Zabriskie Point* because it reminded him of *La Chinoise*; and that he likes 'parts of *Potemkin*' but thinks *October* is 'revisionist'.

*Mao* begins with one of those quintessentially Godardian tracking shots, slowly . . . slowly . . . SLOWLY taking in a deafening sports car assembly line while a didactic narrator intones revolutionary shibboleths. You can't help thinking of the similar (but anarchistic) shot in *Weekend*, the spectacular collision, and wondering if Godard is aware of the fatalistic implications of the relentless progress of capitalist machinery through the complacent workers. The narrator, as in *One Plus One*, sounds uncomfortably like Hal the Computer.

One wonders how the audience is reacting to a dawdling head-on shot of a vagina with women's liberation slogans droning on the soundtrack. The first exchange with the audience settles the issue. Why, a young lady asks, are you concerned only with the liberation of the body, not of the mind? Godard cannily applauds her and declares that *See You at Mao* is 'completely revisionist' because it was made back in March 1969. 'I need to be liberated by a woman,' he adds, and the audience cheers. 'I don't speak personally, but as a militant worker. This movie was done by people who didn't know where they were but thought they knew where other people were.' Godard professes humility: 'If I'm famous, it's only because I'm still a bourgeois.' A girl in the audience whispers, 'But Karl Marx was famous!' The inevitable follows, with the students anxious to prove Godard wrong because he believes in the working class and demanding to know why he accepts money for the lecture instead of giving it to the Movement. Somebody even asks why he wastes money by shooting in colour instead of black-and-white. A young man throws everyone off-guard when he says that he's no Maoist, but after seeing the film he wants to cut kids' hair, put them in uniforms, and send them into the fields for the Chairman. Godard responds cryptically, 'We try not to work any more with feelings and impressions.'

On his radicalisation: 'I was raised in a bourgeois family. To escape from my family, I worked in another family, show business. It took me fifteen years to discover that it was an even more powerful family than the other.' On artists: 'I do not like artists. I like pastry.' On Z: 'It may help some people, but if they think what they have been seeing is true, what really happened, it is not helping them to criticise themselves. The proof is that it won an Oscar. The Greek government is controlled by the CIA, and Hollywood is the ideological branch of the CIA.'

Asked if rock is revolutionary: 'Music is a tool of the establishment.' To a person who called him a trend-follower: 'You know more about me than I know about you. That's not fair.' On the visual barrenness of his films since *Weekend*: 'America and the West have only one sound, but many images—Nixon, Hollywood, Walt Disney. The one sound is imperialism. We don't know the correct sound, but we feel we know better what the correct images are. So we limit the images and allow our sound as much freedom as possible.' Defining a

"WATERLOO": SERGEI BONDARCHUK REHEARSES HIS INFANTRY ON THE UKRAINIAN HILLS.



film: 'A blackboard between the difficulties of life and the actions to change that life.'

The session probably came closest to the truth when the two comrades were asked why they were so dogmatic. 'Because we're dogmatists,' Gorin said. I thought of Belmondo's wry existentialist credo in *A Bout de Souffle*: 'Squealers squeal, burglars burgle, lovers love . . .' Like his first protagonist, Godard has written off the past and seems on a collision course with nowhere. When I asked him what he thinks of Truffaut's films, he scowled. And when asked why he hasn't been working with Raoul Coutard, he said, 'Coutard is now making a film in South Vietnam for Paramount, and so I have nothing more to do with him.' Godard's career, like the highway in *Weekend*, is riddled with corpses. But it isn't funny at all.

JOSEPH MCBRIDE

## Oberhausen Discovery

OBERHAUSEN this spring was again a festival in ferment, but the watchful pragmatism of its administrators, Hilmar Hoffmann and Will Wehling, at least ensured that screenings ran according to schedule. The concept of festival prizes comes under heavier fire each year, and after a prolonged dispute with the militants, the Oberhausen jury virtually agreed to hold all future deliberations in public. In practice, this probably means that the Oberhausen awards, hitherto the most lucrative in the short film field, will cease to exist in 1971. But there was in any case a certain death-wish logic about the prize system this year, with the cash being distributed to films from the underdeveloped countries, however inept they might look. Charity, rather than quality, was the criterion.

Towering over the week was a thirty-five film retrospective of Cuban cinema that made the entries in the Festival proper look pale and hesitant. But the real revelation of Oberhausen 1970 was the work of a reticent Dutchman named Frans Zwartjes. No political saws from Zwartjes in a year when nearly every short film director was crying for revolution. His is an hermetic world of guilt, disgust, and thwarted desire. Raven-haired girls like Louise Brooks are photographed in close-up, their faces lit to an incandescent whiteness, their eyes black craters of sexual interrogation.

In *Seats Two*, Trix and Moniek, two of Zwartjes' favourite actresses, act out a Lesbian interlude on a couch. Trix looks through sun-glasses at a photograph of some mountain landscape, while Moniek shifts desultorily beside her. The physical attraction between the two women is almost tangible—stockinged legs inclined to one another, touching and retreating, stretching and stroking. Nothing really happens; this couple is locked in pitiful frustration.

In *Home Sweet Home*, a man and woman play out a stiff-lipped erotic ritual worthy of Buñuel. Under the harsh lighting, the faces look not quite male, not quite female. They become masks of lust and antagonism. The man wears white gloves and tries furiously to rouse his partner by thrusting a beetle into her face. Like a climax, she rises to her knees, extends a shiny-shod leg and crushes the creature into the pillow. All this is related in a jolting sequence of images, with Zwartjes cutting 'against the beat' and giving thereby a palpable visual charge to the climate of sexual challenge and defeat.

Similarly, in *Birds* Zwartjes uses a 'stop-motion' technique to tantalise his audience



GLENDIA JACKSON IN JOHN SCHLESINGER'S "BLOODY SUNDAY", SCRIPTED BY PENELOPE GILLIATT

as Trix, reclining darkly, dangles a paper bird like a Beardsley fetish above her legs. The camera rocks and slides as if in a trance, and the white shape, fluttering to the raucous accompaniment of squeaks off-screen and set against the girl's impassive face, becomes the vehicle of her hunger.

Zwartjes goes to considerable pains over his soundtracks. In *Eating*, loud ticking alternates continually with a four-note clarion call while the camera records a kinky 'eat-in', with three bare-bosomed girls, one wearing a bearded male mask, tasting food that is simultaneously scalding and aphrodisiac, and eventually plastering each other with sauce and pie. The effect is grotesque, as if a primitive urge were being glutted, the debasement bringing its own satisfaction.

Like Buñuel's, Zwartjes' films have humour but little compassion. To ridicule his work implies a failure to recognise the deep currents of yearning and fantasy that run in human nature and that are given such furtive, squirming life by this talented director.

PETER COWIE

## Cinema City

IN 1956 THE British Film Institute and the *Observer* got together to present a London exhibition commemorating 60 years of films. This September the National Film Archive and the *Sunday Times* are collaborating to put on 'Cinema City—75 Years of Moving Pictures'. The discrepancy of one year in this anniversary game is explained by the fact that the *Sunday Times* regards the Lumière show in the Boulevard des Capucines in 1895 as the true birth of the movies, while the *Observer* preferred to date it from the following year when the brothers brought the Cinématographe to England. The *Daily Express* used the same starting point in 1946 when they staged 'Fifty Years of Films' at Dorland Hall.

The time is ripe for another film exhibition. Cinema City will be bigger than any

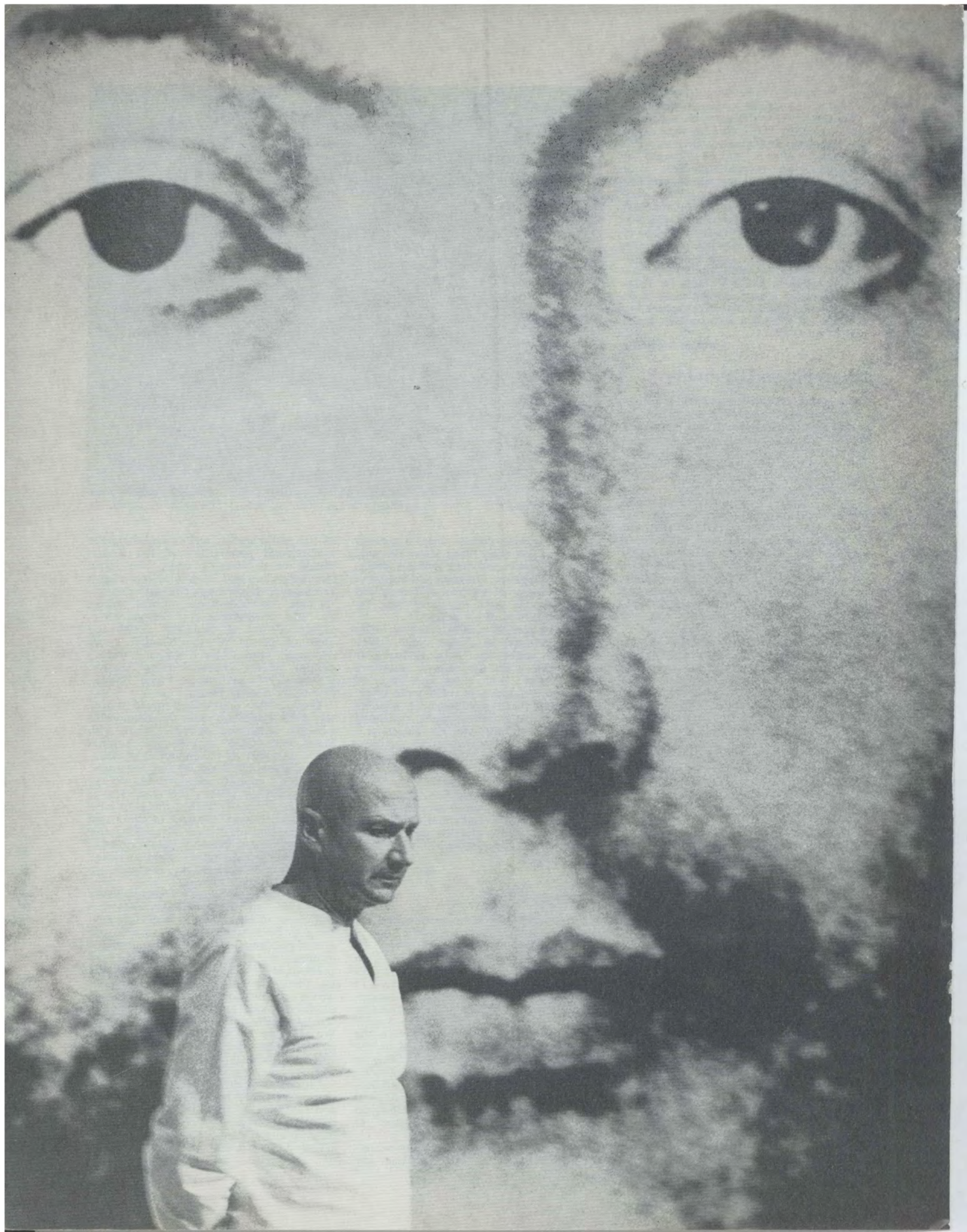
of the earlier events and is exploiting the architectural peculiarities of the Round House to achieve its ends. The large, circular gallery will be divided into twelve rooms, each devoted to a cinematic genre—the epic, the Western, the musical, and so on. The co-directors are George Perry, author of one or two film books and assistant editor of the *Sunday Times Magazine*, and Colin Ford, the deputy curator of the National Film Archive. Cinema City's designer is Emile Gamba, also of the *Sunday Times*.

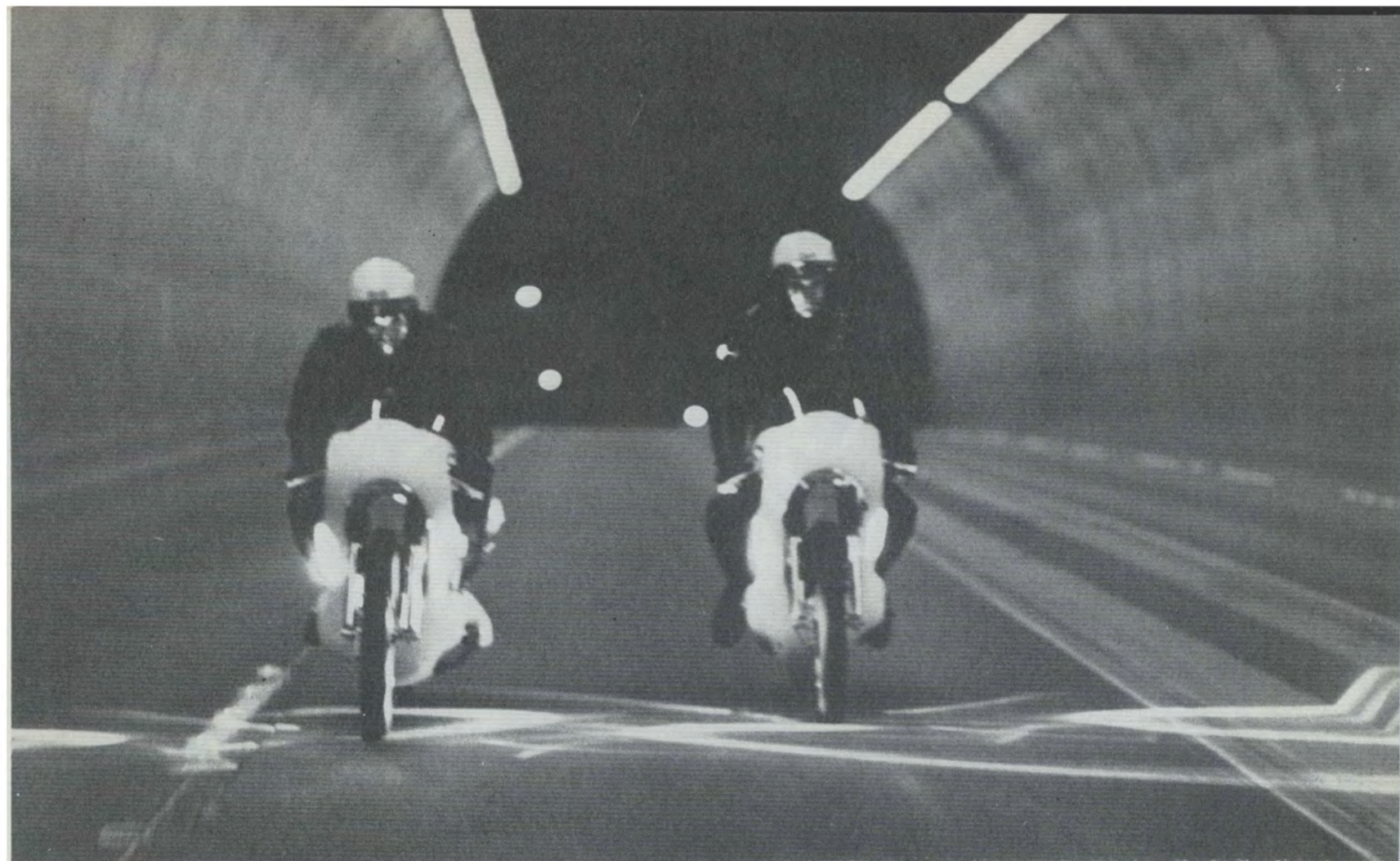
Considerable controversy raged during the 1956 exhibition and the memorable Lindsay Anderson essay 'Stand Up, Stand Up' (*SIGHT AND SOUND*, Autumn 1956) was part of the literature of abuse heaped upon the heads of the organisers. Anderson's main attacking theme was the superficiality of taste which characterised the whole thing. Since then old films have become an integral element of camp and trendiness and the *Sunday Times Magazine* is a publication possibly more culpable than most in fostering a delight in Hollywood's more meretricious nonsense, so purists may expect the worst.

'Attitudes to films have changed vastly since 1956,' say Ford and Perry. 'Honest enjoyment of old movies is no longer anything to be ashamed of, and in any case one of the great pleasures of the cinema is in unearthing treasures that may have been overlooked at the time of release. Where we think the *Observer* exhibition went wrong was in overloading the graphic displays so that the films themselves took second place to murals and arty decorations. We will use as much projected film as possible, and where we can't get moving film we'll have slides. And the auditorium will be showing complete films every day.'

On one point no one need disagree. The cinema is badly in need of a shot in the arm, and Cinema City could well provide some uplift and optimism for those who may have thought that the industry's first seventy-five years were also its last.

JAMES MORGAN





# THX1138

From Francis Ford Coppola's  
new Zoetrope company,  
a first film by 25-year-old  
George Lucas.  
Starring Donald Pleasence (left).



**SOME  
OUT-TAKES  
FROM  
RADICAL  
FILM  
MAKING:  
EMILE DE  
ANTONIO**

**B**ACKLIGHTING HAD BEEN fastened to the flocked wall-paper with gaffer tape. Divots had been dug in the carpet for the 16 mm. Eclair camera. Spare magazines and sound equipment had been stacked up on the Chippendale furniture. When Senator Eugene McCarthy arrived back at his suite in New York's St. Regis Hotel, Emile de Antonio was ready for him. The interview began at once, and McCarthy was deftly prompted to do something politicians seldom do. He gave an unsentimental, undeluded account of one of his own political campaigns, the one he waged against Lyndon Johnson in the 1968 presidential primaries. De Antonio asked McCarthy few questions, none of them pointed and all of them well-informed. The questions he did ask seemed designed only to dislodge an anecdote or two from McCarthy's memory, and thus lead him to his own free association of events with ideas.

De Antonio made that interview last fall for his new film about McCarthy, the fourth feature documentary de Antonio has done. All his previous films have also been about American politics—or more precisely, about the self-incrimination of American politics that he calls 'political theatre'. Despite the

Colin J.  
Westerbeck, Jr.

films' bias of radical dissent, however, his approach to interviewing suggests that what he's creating is a lay analysis of history rather than agit prop. (He is an admirer of Wilhelm Reich.) In the interviews, de Antonio is obviously trying to leave his subject free to reveal himself, or betray himself, on his own terms. The purpose of this technique is that it allows de Antonio to efface himself completely from the finished film: his voice is never heard on the soundtrack. What he does is to take the interviews he's made in this way and intersperse them with relevant newsreel footage he has obtained, usually from the major TV networks.

De Antonio devised his technique as an interviewer when he made a special about the New York mayoral race for the BBC in 1965. That was his second film project and the only thing he has done that wasn't a feature released through the commercial theatres. Ironically, de Antonio's first film, which contained no interviews at all, was about that other McCarthy, Senator Joseph McCarthy, the Grand Inquisitor of American Communism in the 1950s.

While admitting that there's no orthodox way in which men become film-makers, it is still safe to say that the way de Antonio became one was singularly unorthodox. He was already middle-aged when he made *Point of Order*, the film about Joseph McCarthy. He had never been interested in film before that, and he hadn't even given much serious thought to politics since his undergraduate years at Harvard. In fact, he only became involved in the film because a good friend of his, Daniel Talbot, the owner of Manhattan's New Yorker Theatre, suggested the idea to him.

Until then de Antonio had done a number of things, each of them as unrelated to the others as they all were to the vocation of film-making. He had been sufficiently radicalised at Harvard to try a post-grad education as a longshoreman on the Baltimore docks. But World War II interrupted that career; and when the war was over, so was de Antonio's interest in politics, at least for a while. From the service he went into graduate school at Columbia University in New York. He also taught a few semesters at William and Mary College in Virginia. But he eventually began to feel that teaching was just a phony kind of theatre. (He now says, of course, that 'the best theatre is politics.') He dropped out of the academic world altogether and returned to New York, where he spent the next decade or so trying to work little while living well.

He experimented with a variety of money-making schemes. One of the most successful, for instance, was *Sailor's Surplus*, a mail-order business which he dreamed up with an ex-writer from *Time-Life* magazine. But primarily he became a promoter for the arts. Because he did his drinking at the San Remo in Greenwich Village, he had got to know New York School artists Jasper Johns and Bob Rauschenberg. With them he formed a company called *Impresarios, Inc.*, which produced the 25th Anniversary concert for composer John Cage in 1958, and a year later produced a similar gala for dancer Merce Cunningham. Such ventures didn't make de Antonio rich, but they were his entrée to New York's wealthy and politically liberal patrons of the arts—some of whom would later be his own patrons in film.

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His belated turn to film-making, and return to an interest in politics, came in the early 1960s. At a party one night, Talbot suggested making a film from the greatest thing that had ever happened on television: the Senate's Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954. De Antonio was taken with the idea. He quickly raised 75,000 dollars from another friend, Standard Oil heir Eliot Pratt, and eventually acquired the kinescopes of the hearings from the Columbia Broadcasting System. But the running time of those kinescopes was 188 hours. The two of them had had no idea what they were letting themselves in for by trying to reduce that much material to a feature film.

The project dragged on and on. At one point, in order to recoup some money on the venture, Talbot desperately suggested offering theatres the twelve-hour cut they had made so far

as a serial. De Antonio also tried calling in a Hollywood professional to help them. But the man simply couldn't see the theatrical potential de Antonio felt the kinescopes had all by themselves; nor could he understand de Antonio's determination to respect the integrity of the hearings as a self-contained, self-sufficient drama. Two years after they had begun the project, Talbot had gone back to managing his theatre, and de Antonio had gone broke. But the film, a ninety-seven minute documentary, was finished. At his own insistence, de Antonio had done the final cut singlehandedly, learning about film-making as he went.

The completion of the film wasn't the end of their troubles, however. No distributor would touch *Point of Order*, so de Antonio and Talbot had to secure a theatre on their own. They premiered the film at the Beekman on Manhattan's fashionable East Side; and the morning after they did so, Bosley Crowther said in reviewing the film for *The New York Times*, 'I can't imagine anyone who did not experience the excitement [in 1954] finding much more in this compendium than a bewildering look-in on a freakish political event.'

If Crowther had bothered to go back to the theatre during the following weeks, he might have been surprised to see that the people standing in line to get in were precisely those people who hadn't experienced the 'excitement' of the hearings themselves. They were mostly high-school and college students too young to remember McCarthy. But what must have attracted them to the film was the same thing that had attracted de Antonio to making it: the suspicion that the McCarthy phenomenon wasn't 'freakish' at all—that it was an alarmingly central expression of American politics. *Point of Order* was released in 1964, just as the Vietnam war was becoming a major issue in America, and the political developments of the next few years were to create, especially among the young, an audience for the films de Antonio would be making.

\* \* \*

De Antonio emerged from the making of *Point of Order* with some fundamental insights into the way the mass media work. He also emerged with his own counter-philosophy of film-making. Paul Newman had offered to do a narration for *Point of Order*, but de Antonio turned him down. The first proposition of the philosophy he was evolving is that all film narration is dishonest. His films have no narration, which is what he regards as their trademark. He feels that, 'Whenever there's a real filming problem, television producers simply cut away to the announcer and you have his face on the screen and he's talking about it. The narrator on TV becomes a super figure who has to explain to you what you've seen, or what you haven't been allowed to see. It's not the same as the jackboots of the Nazis, obviously; but it is a kind of fascism of the mind.'

'The essence of film—of what even propaganda film is about, but almost any film really—is the extraordinary capacity of film to reveal rather than state. Instead of saying, "This is what's happening," you cut from one situation or sequence to another to reveal what's happening and to build up a rhythm and a tension. This is, of course, exactly what television producers avoid.'

'The Russians realised early in film that editing is structure and structure is what film is about. The raw material that goes into a film ultimately makes no difference. It is better if you have footage shot by Futter instead of newsreel, maybe. But there are times when newsreel is so much more fascinating. The Russians used the image, which I think is correct. The individual frames, the pieces of film, are like the words in a poem: they're just like all the words lying in the dictionary. It's how they're put together and used which is finally what matters.'

De Antonio also recognises that someone who wants to make political documentaries has no choice other than to acquire his footage from the TV networks. As far as he is concerned, doing so is a necessary 'act of expropriation' because the mass media are a monopoly. 'Again,' he points out, 'all the material that is film is film, and it makes no difference who shoots it. If you're doing documentary work, there is nobody who shoots as much material that is shot as well as

OPPOSITE. AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN VIETNAM, FROM "IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG". LEFT: EMILE DE ANTONIO IN HIS MANHATTAN CUTTING ROOM.

American television. There is no way in the world an independent film-maker can do this unless he has 25 million dollars. He can't even get the accrediting. What do you suppose happens if an independent, left-wing film-maker tries to get into a White House press conference? As far as the Kennedy assassination was concerned, you couldn't even get to Dallas and get in the front row with your camera, because the networks and UPI and AP and World-Wide had pre-empted the amount of space available.'

At the time Kennedy was assassinated, de Antonio wasn't trying to get to Dallas and get into the first row. But within a year after he finished *Point of Order*, he was beginning to be curious about what happened in that front row, and he was finding it difficult to get even second-hand access to the assassination. He had attended a lecture on the assassination given by Mark Lane, a former New York State Assemblyman and a defence trial lawyer. Lane was in the process of writing a book called *Rush to Judgment*, which was to be a critique of the Warren Commission Report and a brief for the defence of Lee Harvey Oswald. De Antonio and Lane met over lunch one day, with the result that they agreed to make a film of the book once it was published.

Unable at first to find an American publisher who would touch so controversial a book, Lane had to go to England, which is where de Antonio also found the backers for the film. Woodfall Films, the company run by Tony Richardson and Oscar Lewenstein, decided to back *Rush to Judgment*, although Tony Richardson believed that Oswald was guilty. Once the money was secured, de Antonio and Lane set out for Dallas to interview as many witnesses as possible, especially those whose testimony the Warren Commission had either given short shrift or ignored entirely.

They had just arrived in Dallas when two police detectives intimidated the camera crew so thoroughly that they were afraid to remain in the city. De Antonio and Lane moved their home base to a motel some miles outside Dallas, but they continued to search for their witnesses. Most of the people they sought they found, and they obtained the cooperation of many of them (over twenty in all), although others refused to help because they had been threatened regarding the film by local or federal agents. In a sense, however, an incident connected with some of the people de Antonio couldn't hope to find is more startling than the story of those he did find.

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There was a woman working in the film archives at the Columbia Broadcasting System who remembered de Antonio from *Point of Order* and knew that he was working on a new film based on Lane's book. She phoned one day to ask whether he would like to look at the out-takes, the footage never put on the air, from a special programme CBS had done on the Warren Commission Report. An evening screening session was arranged at which one of CBS's own editors would monitor the footage to be seen. De Antonio was at CBS until after midnight that evening watching six continuous hours of out-takes. 'There was William Whaley,' he recalls, 'the Dallas cab driver who allegedly drove Oswald away from the assassination scene: dead in an accident soon after he was interviewed. Nobody was ever going to film him again. There were all sorts of other people connected with Oswald who had never answered my letters or phone calls, or whom I'd been unable to locate.' Since a great many witnesses were already either dead or (it seems fair to say) missing in action, those out-takes were quite a find.

Before de Antonio left CBS that night, he signed order forms specifying the footage he wanted and agreeing to the price. But the next morning the woman who had phoned him in the first place called back to say she'd made a terrible mistake. The out-takes weren't for sale after all: in fact, the network was destroying them. De Antonio protested to CBS not only on his own behalf, but on the grounds that the footage was part of the raw material of history which he felt the network had an obligation to preserve. But CBS destroyed the footage anyway.

De Antonio says that 'The political censorship here is that



EMILE DE ANTONIO.

of self-interest.' He describes his own politics, somewhat paradoxically, as 'libertarian Marxist'; and libertarian or not, he is clearly a Marxist where the TV industry is concerned. 'The television stations,' he says, 'represent the ruling class of America—the class that owns the means of production. In effect, they are the ruling class, so they are rarely going to put anything on—only rarely, and only in the guise of simple liberalism—that seems to be against their better interest. A licence from the Federal Communications Commission is simply a licence to manufacture money and exploit the American people. It has nothing to do with freedom of expression, nothing to do with art, nothing to do with freedom of politics. These people are sausage makers: they've taken the twenty-four hours of the day and cut them up to be sold in fifteen-minute links.'

Yet de Antonio is convinced that people like the woman who offered him the out-takes for *Rush to Judgment* are his secret allies, and that he finds such fellow-subversives in all the bureaucracies he deals with. When he was making his third film, *In the Year of the Pig*, which is about the Vietnam war, he even encountered one in France. Thanks to Paul Mus, the famous Vietnam scholar who is interviewed in the film, de Antonio had become the first foreigner ever allowed to examine the newsreels in the French Military Archives. While he was working there, however, the French authorities made it clear they'd changed their mind about him. It was suddenly necessary to put up an immense amount of money in advance; shipping delays would be inevitable, and interminable; and so forth. In brief, he wasn't going to get anything from them. But before he left someone suggested to him, 'Why don't you steal it: I'd help you.'

On another occasion, back in the States, a network executive copped 100,000 feet of 16 mm. colour film and offered it to de Antonio for radical scavenging. His only explanation was

that he'd give anything to work with the kind of freedom de Antonio enjoys. And then there was the girl at the Sherman Grinberg Film Library who called de Antonio's attention to a network's out-takes of Colonel George S. Patton. The out-take is of a field interview conducted by the American Broadcasting Company. What is extraordinary about it is that Colonel Patton, the son of the World War II general with the same name, is bragging coyly about what 'a bloody good bunch of killers' American boys have become in Vietnam. De Antonio did manage to obtain this out-take. But if it is one of the high points of *In the Year of the Pig*, it is also one of the low points of American history, which is presumably the reason ABC never showed it to the American public. It would be hard to imagine more persuasive evidence for de Antonio's assertion that 'Out-takes are the confessions of the system.'

President Nixon's 'silent majority' will probably never see *In the Year of the Pig* at the neighbourhood theatre. As de Antonio himself realises, 'People go to films to be entertained, to be amused, and particularly *not* to be confronted with problems.' But the film has already developed an infra-audience and an ultra-audience outside the commercial theatre. Besides lecturing with the film on dozens of campuses, de Antonio has given it to benefits for many radical causes. At one point it was running twenty-four hours a day in the anti-war movement's Fort Dix coffee house, and it was more recently shown to raise money for the defence fund of the Conspiracy trial in Chicago. Moreover, because the film is very scholarly, it has made it in the Power Structure as well as the Underground. It was shown last year in Cambridge, Mass., at the Conference of Concerned Asian Scholars. It has been seen by various congressmen and senators, and, at a special screening, by the entire staff of *Time* magazine.

\* \* \*

But de Antonio isn't willing to speculate much about the kind of influence the film's uniquely binocular projections might represent. 'The first person who has to be moved by my films,' he insists, 'is myself. In that sense, I make my films for myself. I don't make films for an audience: that's what television does. To be absolutely honest, I assume most people going to see *Pig* already feel the war is bad. And I also assume the real avenues of power aren't reachable. I don't think anybody's going to reach Mr. Nixon with a film. It would be naive to think so. The most that my film does is make some contribution to a climate of opinion that already exists. On the other hand, though, these films of mine are necessary. We live in the big lie in this country, and my films are a challenge to that. Unlike most radical films—the films made by the Newsreel, for instance—my films have more than just a raving point of view.'

Despite their limited appeal as business propositions, de Antonio's films remain something of a *cause célèbre* among wealthy liberals, and *In the Year of the Pig* was financed in classic corporate fashion. De Antonio enlisted the aid of Mrs. Orville Schell, a wealthy New York socialite who is cited in the credits as executive producer. She gave a series of dinner parties for de Antonio at which he would make a spiel about Vietnamese history and the war. Then she herself would get up to hawk shares in the film at 560 dollars apiece. Investors included Richard Avedon and Abby Rockefeller, Paul Newman and Leonard Bernstein, *et al.* When the film needed an angel to back its first commercial run, the big money came to the rescue again. A young New York stockbroker offered to put up 15,000 dollars to open the film in Boston: de Antonio was asked for no money of his own, and the angel expected only to recoup the original \$15,000, which he did. While de Antonio's films aren't big killings for investors, they don't lose money either.

*In the Year of the Pig* is a hard film. It's a hard film to watch, as de Antonio admits, and it's hard on America. It's completely

unforgiving of the pain America has inflicted on itself in this war, as well as on the Vietnamese. Yet de Antonio says he wants it understood that, 'I'm not anti-American, as most people think: I'm anti the policy of our Government, and anti the policy of the ruling class. I think the artist who is interested in his society has always had a critical view of it. The essential well springs of artistic ideas are anarchistic. No matter how you twist them around, they're an anti form of thinking. It would be very difficult for me to produce a positive document: it's no accident that all my work is negative.'

One of the problems de Antonio has with his film work is that it's self-restricting. The more taboo his subjects are politically, the more difficulty he has in gaining access to the networks' material. When he made *Point of Order*, which turned out to be a 50,000 dollar windfall for CBS and still pays royalties, the network was at first reluctant to sell to him. Even after the network did so, it still refused to have its name associated with the film in any way. (The publishing company that owns Pathé Contemporary, his current distributor, likewise refuses to have its name used.) Now CBS and the National Broadcasting Company have established a new policy just for him: they won't sell their footage to anyone, period. De Antonio can escape that injunction to some extent because he can still buy those networks' footage from an English subsidiary. But his sources are becoming ever more limited. When he was in the midst of making *In the Year of the Pig*, an international news service tried to retrieve footage it had sold him because, he was told, 'We didn't know what kind of film you were going to make.'

De Antonio says that it would now be impossible to make *Rush to Judgment* in the States; but he also admits that in the Communist countries that have admired his work and invited him to visit—East Germany, for instance—it would never have been possible to make a film like *Rush to Judgment* at all. He did accept the assistance of the North Vietnamese when he was making *In the Year of the Pig*. Mai Van Bho, Hanoi's ambassador to Paris, offered to let him make a negative of *The Life of Ho Chi Minh*, an official film biography, never seen in the West before, which contains otherwise unavailable still and motion footage of Ho's career. But de Antonio has no immediate desire to go to North Vietnam, or Cuba, even though those countries would make him welcome.

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He's not sure what he will do when he finishes his film on Senator Eugene McCarthy. During last November's Vietnam moratorium he even thought briefly of forming an alliance with fellow documentarians Richard Leacock and D. A. Pennebaker. De Antonio's idea was that the three of them should go to Washington, D.C. for the peace demonstrations with a whole bus load of students from the New York University Film School. Each student would be turned loose with an inexpensive Super-8 camera. De Antonio, Leacock and Pennebaker would act as roving directors. When the weekend was over, the three men would jointly edit the accumulated footage into a feature documentary. Then the film would be turned over to the anti-war movement gratis, with no financial strings attached, for benefit showings.

The project never got beyond the planning stages, however, because neither Leacock nor Pennebaker was enthusiastic about it, and de Antonio, the only one of the three then making a feature of his own, couldn't spare the time to do it alone. The project was a good idea, too. Ironically, it should have been the kind of thing Leacock and Pennebaker do more readily than de Antonio. Judging by their rock festival film *Monterey Pop*, capturing the *mise en scène* of a sentimental occasion is their speciality. But the project was strangely uncharacteristic of de Antonio himself. His films have never been just documents about radical dissent: they have always been documents of radical dissent.

# MORE BRITISH SOUNDS

Jan Dawson and Claire Johnston look at some of the films being made independently in this country

## The Tattooists

SUPERFICIALLY, THEIR FILMS are as varied as the budgets they were made on. At the one extreme is *Double Pisces*, made for between £8,000 and £9,000 as the official Austrian entry for the Montreux TV festival. It uses an elusive mixture of *cinéma-vérité* (Tattooist Dick Fontaine's visit to his wife to ask for a divorce), cinema parody (Dick poised with sub-machine-gun on the roof of his old Cambridge college), literary allusion (a Kafka-esque commentary in which Fontaine, who has worked as a TV director, is charged with the treason of giving his audiences what they wanted), and allegory (Jean Shrimpton reciting to the audience in best bedtime-story manner the fable of Dr. Doubt). And it builds both to a self-critical portrait of the character Fontaine plays—the line between autobiography and performance is deliberately obscure—and to a more generalised picture of a consumer society, in which working for the media becomes cause and alibi for a dozen daily betrayals of conscience, in which a man can only cling to the necessary myth of his own honesty by believing that his work is somehow separate from his 'real self'.

At the other extreme there's the film made for the Creative Circle of advertisers, consisting largely of typewritten statements and questions simultaneously flashed on the screen and read aloud in rather Big-Brotherish tones by the 'voice of the film' ('Already some of you are thinking, this isn't value for money; this isn't what we came for'), and containing a lengthy blank screen sequence in which the unseen speaker 'comes down' into the audience to see how things look from there. Or the single take *Talk Film* (also known as *Tat-*

*tooists* # 5 and made for about £50) in which—in front of a fixed camera—Mike Myers lolls about on a sofa, smokes, snickers, abuses the audience for expecting him to give them more than they give him, and repeatedly invites them to leave.

Somewhere in the middle sits *Pleasant Nightmare* (# 9), a documentary portrait of Manchester ('the city as a metaphor for personality') which, with its rather tendentious commentary balanced by its attentive scrutiny of working-class people in their own environment, comes across essentially as a hip version of Free Cinema. It is intended to be shown in a single programme with *The Other Guys Are the Joke* (# 8), a *cinéma-vérité* study of Norman Mailer's election campaign in New York, in which the camera's insistence on rows of identical high-rise apartments and congested freeways underlines Mailer's remarks about 'the systematic homogenisation of the aesthetic around us'; and with # 10, *Messages from the Lost Planet*, a dizzying, dazzling montage of single frame shots of advertisements, street signs, urban American architecture, carefully cut to a first-rate pop score and powerfully conveying the impression of a disintegrating civilisation. Indeed, one result of the rapid editing is to create the illusion of a second San Francisco earthquake, of buildings looming up and capsizing before our eyes.

But for all their surface differences, the common set of assumptions that enables the Tattooists to work closely as a group emerges strongly from the films. First, the assumption that it's more fun to do a thing than to talk about it, or in other words, more fun to be a participant than a spectator. (On this level, the films—which cleverly and professionally employ all the techniques of TV advertising to attack the idea of a hard-sell, gift-wrapped consumer society—can be viewed as high-pressure advertisements for life.) Second—and this explains how a film as introspective as *Double Pisces* can transcend its subjectivity—the assumption that even the most personal hang-ups are the product/reflection of existing social structures and social pressures, and that consequently all people have an equivalent value as metaphors (synecdoche) for society, that any member of any audience is as interesting as anyone he may see on the screen.

This rejection of the traditional superiority of the film-maker/star over his captive spectators has radical implications. It denies the conventional notion of the cinema as dream factory or temple of revelation in favour of a cinema that, while posing questions, refuses to provide ready-made solutions and denounces the folly of looking for answers in anyone else's head. (Many of the soundtracks take the form of a string of rhetorical questions.) It paradoxically assaults the concepts of ego and status while asserting the inalienable worth of

each individual. On the psychological level, it is an elaboration of the Zen-Laingian-pop view of identity that finds its expression in such Beatle lyrics as 'I am he, And you are me, And we are all together . . .'. On the social level, it's an affirmation of collective responsibility ('There's no such thing as an innocent bystander'—*Double Pisces*). But, more to the point, it denies the separability of psychological and social levels, deriving essentially from a revolutionary vision of a society in which people need no longer be alienated from their work, their politics or their technology.

Indeed, uniting Beatle philosophy to McLuhanism, the same advice, 'be yourself', is offered to the spectator and the medium. Whatever messages or suggestions the Tattooists' films may contain, these are never allowed to obscure the spectator's awareness of the medium

Hello.  
I'm an  
Inkfilm  
Stand in  
front of  
a mirror  
Read  
me  
out loud  
And see  
for yourself  
Films are  
easy

FROM THE TATTOOISTS

through which they're being presented to him. 'Hello, I'm a film . . .' begins # 3, and remarks like the following from # 2 and 4, ('It's a funny thing The Cinema Isn't it? You sitting there In rows Saying nothing In the dark And us up here Saying everything. We would prefer it to be The other way around') form the spoken or unspoken basis of nearly all the films. So that instead of the naturalists' transparent fourth wall, the screen is more often used as an opaque mirror.

Audience participation isn't a token phrase. The Tattooists like to present their films in person, to be able to stop or dim the projector if—as in # 5's 30-second shot of a microphone—the audience accept the invitation to speak for themselves. In this way the film is no longer given to the audience but modified by them, becoming one element in a complex process of interaction and a step toward abolishing the distinction between art and life. So, paradoxically,

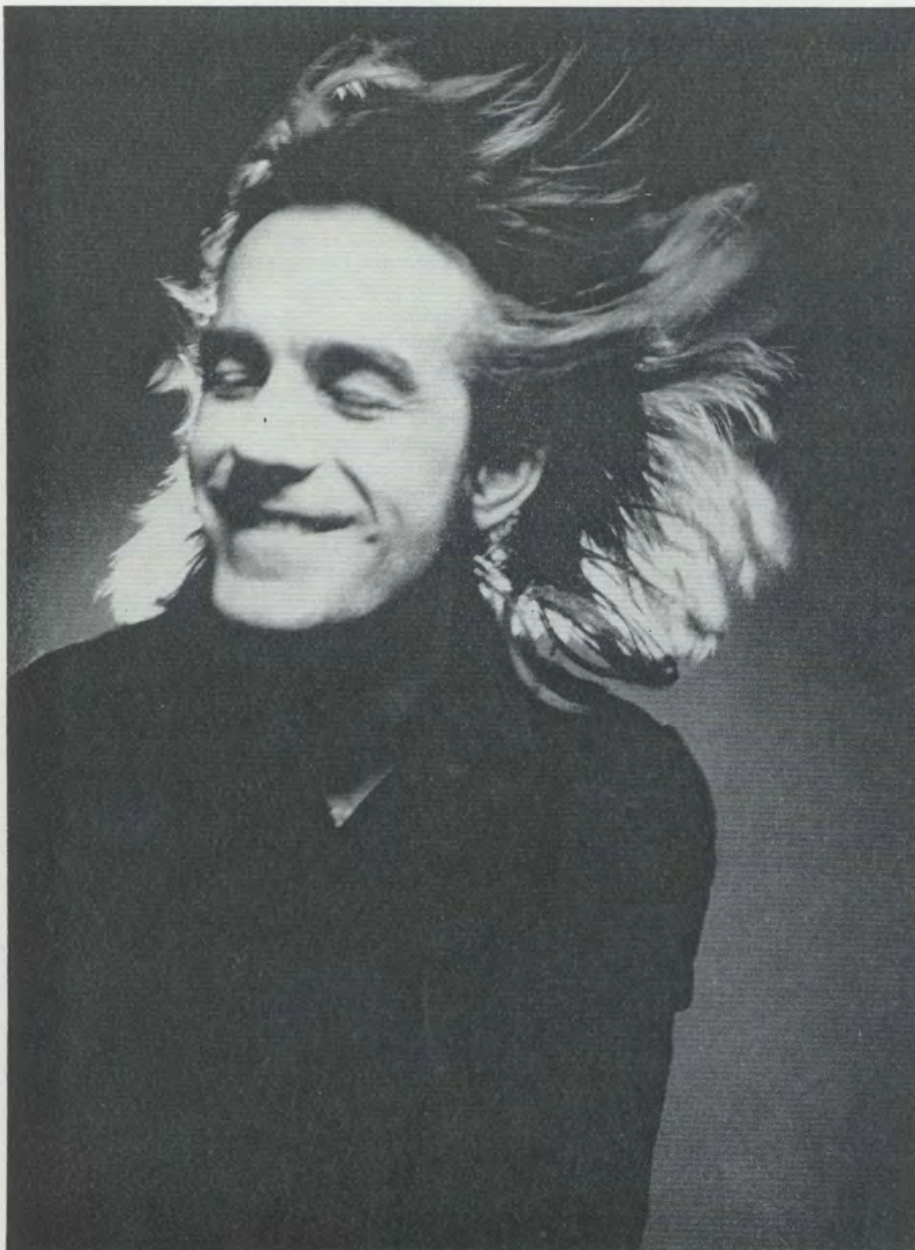
alienation effects are used to undermine the phenomenon of alienation, to engage the audience in a dialogue with film and film-maker, to break down the distinction between 'us' and 'them' which is diagnosed as forming the basis of a sick consumer society.

The result—a simultaneous reappraisal of form and content, message and medium—is applied Godard, perhaps even some of the films for which *Le Gai Savoir* was to serve as a blueprint. But unlike Godard's more recent experiments, in the Tattooist films, cultural legacies, intellectual doubts and technological innovations are assimilated into a dynamic and indivisible whole that is at once critical, optimistic and immensely enjoyable, a celebration of and not a lament for the advance of the new technology. The logical inconsistency of Godard's present position is that he uses films to denounce the cinema as an escapist pastime and to urge people out into the streets where 'life'

is. The Tattooist films also make out a strong case for life over illusionism, but they are no longer hung-up on the distinction between *life* and *film*, and the 'life' they advocate is one that incorporates technological advances and is even revitalised by them.

The Tattooists regard their work so far as the equivalent of research and development in engineering, experimental pilot projects moving towards the creation of new structures. They anticipate the video tape revolution and aspire to making films that can be played as often as, say, a Dylan record, and generate the same kind of collective response as a pop concert. Very appropriately, they have been approached by M-G-M to make a musical with The Who. The result is bound to be disconcerting, but it's likely to establish once and for all that the 'psychedelic revolution' has more to do with politics and technology than with hallucinogenics.—J.D.

BETWEEN AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCE. DICK FONTAINE, PHOTO BY DAVID BAILEY



*The Tattooists and their films are available from 13a Greek Street, London, W.1.*

## Stephen Dwoskin

STEVE DWOSKIN is a graphic designer and an extremely accomplished painter; as a result of polio, he is also partially paralysed. And these two facts, without diminishing his work, help to explain its formal limitations: his approach to film as a material, the progression within each film from concentrated realism to almost pure abstraction, the minimal motions of his hand-held camera, his choice of themes (different expressions of and improvised solutions to the problem of loneliness). Or the perfectly balanced combination of introspective emotion and microscopically observed expression that infuses the best of his work, enabling him to involve us—almost viscerally but never pruriently—in such delicate and potentially uncinematic subjects as a lonely girl furtively yielding to the impulse to masturbate (*Alone*) or a pregnant woman abstractedly exploring her newly metamorphosed body (*Naissant*).

Dwoskin generally uses female subjects ('Visually, women are more expressive: biologically they are more introspective'); and although the women in both films mentioned above remain fully, even drably clothed throughout, it is true to say that all his films are about nakedness—not necessarily as a physical or an erotic condition, but as a psychological state, beyond camouflage or pretence: a state of total exposure. His films are made up—like a painter's work—of a succession of detail studies in which his anatomical detachment is balanced, first by his subjects' involvement with and self-expression through their own bodies, secondly, by their involvement with the camera.

In *Soliloquy*, as a deserted wife talks on about her loneliness, the camera



STEVE DWOSKIN: "CHINESE CHECKERS"

moves in on her nervously pulsing hands with their long, clearly articulated fingers, until the film becomes almost a dirge-like song-and-dance routine, and the fingers—caressing one another in time to her hesitant breathing—each acquire a crazy autonomous existence, twining and intertwining like lovers in the very embraces for which the speaker is hungering. The result is at once realistic and abstract, as enigmatic shapes are seen to derive from familiar forms, and familiar objects take on forms not previously perceived. The succession of details works cumulatively: the gestures Dwoskin records in his films are not isolated images but expressions of an emotional tension that builds to a crescendo (frequently in the form of an imperfect orgasm) before gently subsiding.

Through the motions between his subjects and his camera, Dwoskin communicates their physical frustrations, involving the spectator rather than imposing on him the role of voyeur. In each take (and he has a marked preference for low-angle shots) the camera remains virtually static, not moving towards its subjects but waiting for them to come to it; which they do, greedily, insatiably, like a neurotic drawn to the mirror that confirms his existence. In *Chinese Checkers*, as two women ritualistically turn a formal board game into a sexual assault course, the advances of the Sphinx-like Oriental girl are choreographed as advances towards the camera. From the almost palpable proximity of an extreme close-up, she moves still forward, until she seems virtually to be kissing the lens, drawing us into her menacing ritual of seduction.

In *Chinese Checkers*, Dwoskin employs the sharp contrasts that characterise his work to expressionist effect.

His Oriental predator is at first clothed in black, her 'victim' in white; slowly the costumes change, the victim acquiring a veil of mourning, until finally—as if to underline the ambiguity and interchangeability of their respective roles—the colours are reversed altogether. Still more interesting is the way in which, as the game becomes more ambiguous, Dwoskin adds fresh layers of make-up to his characters' faces, until they become almost caricature masks of their original selves. This technique—with its obvious affinities to painting—forms almost the whole basis of the thirty-minute *Take Me*, in which after a woman has performed a solitary striptease and seduction rite to/for the camera, first creams and then paints are applied to her face and body. Gradually she abandons herself, finally writhing orgasmically about the floor in a pool of viscous fluids—a nude study, her body the basic form to which the painter applies successive layers of brush strokes (some of which appear, surrealistically, from no visible source).

It is partly the developing characterisation of the woman in *Take Me* (albeit treated more abstractly than any of Dwoskin's subjects), and the fact that her abandonment to the paint provides an accurate metaphor for her physical and emotional condition, that prevents the film degenerating into the stag movie which in summary it is apt to resemble. But it is largely the film's soundtrack—a woman's voice, endlessly and serenely humming the same abstracted tune. The sound functions rather like a ticking clock: a reminder of the regular, linear time that counterpoints the violent irregularities of physical exertion and subjective perception. And this tension between confined space and explosive emotion on the one hand, and a serene temporal continuum on the other, provides the dynamic in much of Dwoskin's work.

Although the visual (spatial) element is predominant, it is always carefully counterpointed by sound. (Dwoskin's most frequent collaborator is sound composer Ron Geesin.) For *Alone*, there is a single, eerie chord on the soundtrack, repeated at regular intervals, halfway between a pulse beat and a toxin. Even when verbal language is used, as in *Soliloquy*, the expressive qualities of intonation and intake of breath register more strongly than the literal meanings

STEVE DWOSKIN: "TAKE ME"



of words that are often left deliberately inaudible.

Undoubtedly *avant-garde*, Dwoskin's films could be related to many existing -isms (surrealism, realism, abstract expressionism). But the exciting thing about them is their relentless honesty, and the way they fuse existing modes of expression into a new kind of visual poetry.—J.D.

*Stephen Dwoskin's films are available from the London Film-Makers Co-op, 1 Robert Street, London, N.W.1.*

## Tony Rayns

TONY RAYNS, a third-year Cambridge student, is an editor of *Cinema*, which has so far been the only magazine in this country to look at the underground in the same terms as the commercial cinema, within a general theoretical framework. He believes that with the underground film cinema has only just arrived at the position achieved by the other arts centuries ago, and his sympathies lie therefore in developing a more personal cinema (though he admires a number of commercial film-makers, Roger Corman in particular, and the horror genre in general). His first film was an adaptation of an Edgar Allan Poe story. Then he was influenced away from a narrative framework after seeing Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* and *Scorpio Rising*.

Rayns works in 8 mm. His starting point as a film-maker is not so much communication as a desire to seek out kindred spirits. He regards Anger (about whom his writing is much more rigorous than most criticism on the underground) as the most important film-maker to have emerged from the New American Cinema, and as with Anger, the English occultist Aleister Crowley is a seminal influence. He shares Crowley's belief that everyone has an unrealised potential relating to his mythic make-up, and that Magick is a process by which this mythic aspect of man can be examined. Film, which for him is basically a ritual, becomes a process of initiation, a way of coming to terms with the irrational aspects of personality, using symbolism which appeals directly to the subconscious. Rayns sees the commercial system as inevitably restricting this process, since it is unable to work at the subliminal level or explore the subconscious in any real depth. Content, therefore, rather than technique is the decisive factor in his definition of the underground.

The most striking aspect of his films is the way he succeeds in interpenetrating the waking world, largely characterised by suburban rows of houses, with his dream world, dominated by the imagery of fire, Magick ritual, pastoral innocence and, most importantly, the recurrent image of the open door. The method he uses is one of fast rhythmic editing combined with superimpositions.

Pop motifs play an important part; and one of his early films, *Dolphin Grove*, which was made in two hours, juxtaposes two pop records. (Another film, *Necropolis*, was submitted as an original composition for Part I of his English tripos, which is quite unprecedented.) Rayns' most successful film to date is perhaps *Stone Groove*, suggested by Anger's *Kustom Kar Kommandos*, consisting of a Magick exultation of the love object in the form of a moonlight drive, with music by The Family. His latest project, a two-screen, feature length film to be called *Urial: Overdrive* will depict a day in the life of an earthly being who becomes celestial.—C.J.

*Tony Rayns' films are not yet available for hire.*

## Malcolm LeGrice

MALCOLM LEGRICE came to film-making as a painter, and works as a lecturer at an art college. He began making films—without ever seeing any New American Cinema work—as a natural extension of his work as a painter and interest in abstract expressionism, particularly such artists as Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg. Though his major concerns are formal ones, he does not see technique in itself as defining the underground; rather, he sees the underground very much as an attempt to create a viable alternative society. LeGrice believes that as soon as the underground attempts to confront the Establishment, it ceases to be the underground; and in this way he sees Brakhage's romantic withdrawal from society as exemplary. In the context of Britain, however, he sees practical reasons for creating formal structures in which to work, in the hope that a community of artists will eventually emerge. He himself is one of the organisers of the London Film-Makers Co-op.

The film-makers he most admires are Brakhage, Paul Sharits and Kurt Kren. Most of his own films are concerned with the formal problems of experimenting with time flow and with various printing processes. One of them, *Yes, No, Maybe Not*, which is silent, depicts waves breaking against a timber breakwater, juxtaposed with and superimposed upon smoke rising from the chimneys of Battersea Power Station. It utilises two screens, and concentrates on the continually shifting tone and texture of water and smoke which is achieved by printing positive into negative. Another film, *Spot the Micro-dot or How to Screw the CIA, Part I*, is basically an experiment in visual perception and the persistence of vision, consisting of a hole in the centre of the screen which flashes on and off, changes colour and finally recedes into an increasingly dominant background. Another two-screen film, *Little Dog for Roger*, uses old 9.5 mm. home movie



TONY RAYNS: "HELLHOUND ON MY TRAIL"

material which LeGrice shot as a child, of a dog running around a garden, as basic material for an experiment in printing technique, printing the old film in positive and negative, under glass, so that the sprocket holes are constantly shifting to and fro across the screen, to the muffled tones of 'Keep Your Sunny Side Up' and 'Pedro the Fisherman'.

A film which displays thematic as well as formal concerns is *Castle Two*, another two-screen film which LeGrice made after reading Kafka. It is an attempt to capture the subjective reaction of alienation and paranoia, using a track consisting of muffled extracts from radio news bulletins, lectures on bacteriological warfare, police reports and electronic noises, juxtaposed with recurring film clips suggesting militarism—officials at meetings, military equipment, political speeches, animal experiments and refugees.

LeGrice questions the whole notion of aesthetics as at present defined, preferring the more neutral terminology of information theory ('input', 'output' and 'feedback') so that film is simply defined as information. From behaviourist psychology he has taken such notions as 'stimulus', 'response' and 'reinforcement', to replace aesthetic notions of value. He sees commercial cinema as necessarily predefining information, and so restricting the expectations of the audience rather than liberating them.—C.J.

*Malcolm LeGrice's films are available from the Film-Makers Co-op, 1 Robert Street, London, N.W.1.*

## Holland at Hornsey

THE STUDENT REVOLT at Hornsey College of Art took place as long ago as May 1968. Since then, the *ancien régime* has attempted to restore its former position, staff having been dismissed and a number of students refused readmission; meanwhile, the possibility of a public enquiry into the entire Hornsey Affair hangs in the air. In this context, it is important that *The Hornsey Film* should have been made, to give an authentic voice to the students' claims and ideas. Because of the uncertainty and apathy which

followed the sit-in, and its aftermath, the film was slow to get under way, and only a little newsreel material of the events existed; lack of finance was another consideration. In the 18 months which followed, a film was made, costing over £1,000, by an outsider, Pat Holland, who had formerly worked as a film editor. (It is interesting to note that the resources of the Film and Television Department at the College were not made available to the film-makers, and that none of the film students were involved in the project.)

Although the film is basically a group effort, made by the staff and students themselves and conveying with force their major arguments and concerns, it has probably gained much from having an outsider's contribution. Pat Holland is obviously extremely interested in the theoretical aspects of the art education debate, and her conception of the film is analytical and rigorous. The only newsreel material is that covering a demonstration about the failure to reopen the college in September 1968 and the 'Weep-in', and the rest of the film consists of a re-enactment of the events which led to the sit-in and a presentation of the arguments. The lack of newsreel material was seen as a positive advantage. Pat Holland believes that the 'reality' of news film is often misleading and that *cinéma-vérité* is logically impossible to achieve, and that what was needed was a rhetorical framework in which ideas could be expressed.

The basic approach is dialectical: the official view on art education as laid out in the Summerson and Coldstream Reports is presented appropriately in a classroom situation, while the students' viewpoint is presented in informal groupings. In this way *The Hornsey Film* succeeds in expressing in visual terms one of the central concerns of the whole debate, the claims for student autonomy in the face of the educational structure.

Another interesting aspect is the use of stereotypes and caricature as a deliberate dramatic device. As the discussions between the students and the hierarchy begin to break down, the official position is increasingly portrayed by students wearing grotesque masks, dummies in shop windows, and, at one point, a dustbin lid closing, as the students' efforts to communicate with the authorities are increasingly ignored. Quite clearly, devices of this kind make considerable demands on the performers, and some of the acting does not live up to expectations; but a film of this kind does not depend on the performances within it to achieve its basic effect. What the students were seeking throughout was to develop their own language. Pat Holland's film goes some way towards achieving this.—C.J.

*Available from Cineindependent Film Distributors, 9 Newburgh Street, London, W.1.*

# Ermanno Olmi:

a conversation  
with  
John Francis Lane



Ermanno Olmi was born in 1931 at Bergamo, of the same peasant roots fertilised by strong Christian sentiment which produced the most famous contemporary *bergamasco*, Angelo Roncalli, Pope John XXIII. His parents were peasants who came to work in a factory in the city. At the age of twelve Olmi's mother was already working at a loom. His father was a railway worker, anti-fascist (which lost him his job), who died during the war. The widow and son both got jobs with Edison. Olmi first worked as a clerk; then his artistic interests led him into theatrical and later cinematic activities within Edison itself.

Between 1952 and 1959 he made forty documentaries

culminating in *Time Stood Still*, in which for the first time to a documentary subject (the building of a dam in the mountains) he introduced the human element. From then onwards his films have been about people. In 1961 *Il Posto*, in 1963 *I Fidanzati*, in 1965 *E Venne un Uomo* (A Man Named John), in 1968 *Un Certo Giorno*. For TV he has in recent years done several shorts, including one on St. Anthony, and in 1969 a full length feature in colour, *I Recuperanti* (The Scavengers). Between 1961 and 1965 he helped to run the Milan film production group '22 dicembre' which produced *I Fidanzati*, Eriprando Visconti's *Una Storia Milanese*, De Bosio's *Il Terrorista*, etc.

## 'The cinema is life

MY APPOINTMENT with Olmi is at his hotel, the Michelangelo, a few yards from the Vatican. The great cupola looms outside the window as we talk. I feel that the presence gives Olmi a sense of security. He doesn't like Rome and only comes to the capital when work necessitates. The night before he had attended a private screening of *I Recuperanti*, which was shot in the mountains near Asiago in the lower Veneto where Olmi has a country home. The rest of the time he spends in Milan. Though *I Recuperanti* was shot in colour it will have to be seen on television in black and white as there is no colour TV yet in Italy; millions of people will see it as it will be shown at peak viewing time on Easter Sunday. It is considered a 'safe film' by the programmers of RAI. Olmi's previous film, *Un Certo Giorno* (One Fine Day), has only been seen in art houses.

In the foyer of the Albergo Michelangelo, Olmi looks like one of the many guests who stay at this hotel because it is so conveniently close to the Vatican. Soberly dressed, spectacled, almost excessively polite and obsequious; even his voice sounds like that of a priest. When I play back the first few minutes of tape to make sure the recorder is working, he anticipates me in exclaiming, 'What a priest's voice.' This disarms me, and gradually as we talk I realise that under this formal, conventionally Italian surface there is not only a great deal of charm and sincerity, but also a burning passion for life, and, what is more important (and which after all one sees in his films) an aggressive attitude towards a society which refuses to make allowances for man. Seeing that he responds so well to provocation, I decide to play the 'devil's advocate' in my interview. The role seems appropriate in the setting.

## life is the cinema...'

But first the ritual question about the beginnings . . .

My first interest was in architecture, but I had one eye on the theatre. I enjoyed acting. I enjoyed the performance of the tragedy of Man. At a certain moment I discovered the cinema, for it seemed to me the best medium for reaching the people to whom I wished to speak. At first the cinema was a hobby, something I practised in my spare time with friends with whom I was working in the electrical industry. Then it gradually became a technical factor in the work I was doing, a way of making a record, of providing information about the activity of the industry. Remember that as a spectator I belong to a

generation which was born with neo-realist cinema. I became a conscientious cinemagoer with the emergence of the neo-realist films. My discovery of the cinema had not been when I first set eyes on a camera and lighting equipment, but when I discovered neo-realism and the possibility of the cinema for exploring life.

You started out, then, in industry and your first practical experience of the cinema was in using the film as an instrument of an industrial concern. How did it come about that you moved into creative film-making?

In our society you can produce things or you can produce

ideas. I have nothing against things; they are two different products. Both are necessary. But I am interested in 'producing' ideas. In order to distribute these ideas, it seems to me that the cinema is the most useful medium of our times. So I make films because I desire to talk about the reality of the times in which I live, in other words I desire to express ideas and propose them to the largest number of people. The only unit of measure for me, the only point of reference, the only common denominator is Man. In order to be a man, to exist in other words, I feel I have to make films. The cinema is life and life is the cinema for me. I desire to make films with the same seriousness of purpose with which I desire to go on living. I take living seriously and I hope I can say I take the cinema just as seriously. The cinema is a vehicle for ideas, it is not an object.

*But do you think that a cinema of ideas can reach the large audience you are looking for?*

The film-maker must communicate with as many people as possible. But this must not put a limit on his ideas. It's true that in comparison to the film which is usually considered 'commercial', the type of film I make, and many with me, has a smaller audience. And yet our films are always on the move, even if only in cine clubs and art houses. The prints aren't gathering dust in the cellars of our distribution houses, I can assure you. In terms of tickets sold, the audience for this type of film may seem small, but in reality it is much larger than one imagines.

*I have heard a number of Italian directors say that they believe commercial films are the best vehicle to communicate their ideas to the greatest number of people. Films like Z and Petri's INDAGINE... are films of ideas which are among the most successful 'commercial' films of the season. Pontecorvo's QUEIMADA cost several million dollars but is a film of ideas.*

An author must respect the quality of his ideas more than the quantity of people to whom he can communicate, though of course it is important that he should be sure of an audience. Since films require an enormous economic investment in order to exist, it is obvious that to make the budget break even, one must stimulate an audience's interest. But this mustn't be allowed to put a limit on the author's ideas. What happens? Many of our men of culture who wish to express their ideas through the cinema, end by debasing the medium in this way: they put over their 'message' in thrillers, erotic stories, romantic fables. This is not serious, indeed it is dishonest. I believe that one of the fundamental examples of absolute purity of culture is to be found in the Gospels. The form is simplicity itself. Indeed, by aesthetic and literary standards, they are as modern as you could ask. Many works which we like to consider modern because they represent events of modern behaviour with a certain complacency and self-indulgence, make the product seem commercial because they have aspects of easy accessibility; but I maintain this has necessitated putting a brake on the author's ideas. I won't listen to any justification of this argument. I believe that anyone who stoops to such compromise is not working for culture but for money, justifying himself with a cultural pretext.

*But Shakespeare made concessions to his audience's bad taste?*

So did the authors of the Gospels. The parables for example.

*But the Gospels were not written for entertainment, they were the 'documentary' biography of a preacher's life. Shakespeare wrote plays for a society that wanted thrills of a different kind from the miracles of Jesus.*

Look, at the end of *Hamlet* you find a pile of corpses on the stage. But Shakespeare's message was not in the corpses but in what he says about existence, about man's fears and doubts. Shakespeare is not wallowing in the shedding of blood.

*But he was giving his public what they wanted—blood and buffoonery. They didn't understand philosophy. This was the entertainment of the time, the equivalent of TV.*

Well, in my films there are plenty of spectacular features. Even some blood. In *Un Certo Giorno* there is a man who dies in a car accident. You can't say that nothing happens in my films.

*I'm not trying to criticise your films, I love them and I admire you for your coherence and your rigour. But I simply want to suggest that a film such as UN CERTO GIORNO, like I FIDANZATI, will not reach the vast audience that you speak about as your film made for TV will.*

But do you think that Shakespeare reaches a vast public today?

*Yes, in England. Performances of his plays are always sold out in our theatres.*

Well, I don't want to put myself on Shakespeare's level but, modestly speaking, I notice that my films do very well in England too... But looking at the Italian reality, I can assure you that if you put Shakespeare on one TV channel and a film of the most modest kind on the other channel (not even a San Remo Song Festival or a soccer match), the mass of viewers will watch the film. You see, Shakespeare was not filling his stage with corpses in order to win over audiences. He was filling his stage with facts of life. All the facts of life are of interest to other human beings, be it a tragedy at the limit of human passions or the smallest day to day tragedy. Man will always be interested in these facts, the small ones as much as the big ones. It depends on the weight and importance that the author gives to them. I am sure that many contemporaries of Shakespeare filled their stages with the same kind of bloodcurdling events, in the same way that Molière's contemporaries filled their stages with chamber pots and negligées. But they didn't have the same lasting success because Shakespeare and Molière were using these effects not to win applause but because they were stimulated by the tragedy of man in itself... In the cinema people are encouraged to be interested in the deaths rather than the reasons behind the deaths.

*The 'tragedy of man' which seems to interest you most is that of man at work. Did your experience in industry leave behind some bitterness which prompted your somewhat harsh attitude towards the world of work?*

Work is not a damnation for man. It is his chance to express himself, the average person's opportunity to be creative. But work as it is organised becomes a condemnation. It annuls man. I am certainly not against work; or even against work which produces the things that society demands today. I am against the relationship man has today with the world he works in. Man is conditioned but he is also guilty of letting himself be conditioned. Whatever may happen above him, it is up to him to assert his right to be a free creature. Certainly I was not happy working as a clerk. But it is not the fact of spending a whole day at a desk or screwing a bolt which lowers a man's role as a human being.

*But wouldn't a young man who leads a dull life working in an office like the boy in IL POSTO be tempted to shoot himself after seeing that film?*

No. Many rebelled on seeing the film because they refused to recognise themselves. That I concede. Maybe they didn't want to admit it to themselves. I was a clerk for ten years. But even when my cinematic horizons were far away, when I felt my whole life might be spent behind a desk, I never gave in. There were days when I had little to do, so I would write poems or draw in order to amuse myself, or I would find others like myself who wanted to talk about interesting things.

*But that's because you had an instinctive artistic sensitivity which gave you an outlet, an escape valve.*

But I believe profoundly in man's possibilities. When he gives up, then he signs his own condemnation. He just doesn't believe hard enough. If a man were closed up in a dark room obviously he would not have the ideal conditions for enjoying a sense of freedom. But because a man has a conscience and the capacity for using his intelligence, to read meaning into everyday things, to use his imagination which has no limits beyond that of cosmic knowledge, even in a closed cell he can be free in himself. As I said, the only measure for judgment is man himself, man with his destiny of freedom which nobody can take from him. To give this up is the real admission of failure. And it's obvious we will never blame ourselves for this failure. We will blame the government or society or our wives

or our children or our friends or our soccer team. But it is our own fault.

*But society has to share some of the blame, conditions which a lot of people have no control over. How can man be expected to have the intelligence and imagination to express himself fully if he does not live in a society which gives him that opportunity? Do you take this into account in your philosophy?*

But is it possible that two thousand years after the advent of Christ, three thousand since Confucius . . . ?

*. . . But did they really help? The world might be worse without their messages, but is it yet good enough for them . . . ?*

Man isn't able to understand? Or is it that Man doesn't want to understand? It's still the fault of man.

*In your first film, TIME STOOD STILL, you showed a relationship between an older and younger man forced by circumstances to stay together in the mountains. In your latest film you again tell a story of an old man, this time a very old one, and a young man starting out in life. Once again the background is the mountains. Is this return to the mountains . . .*

. . . It's a return to concrete things, a return to humanity, to a world which has already been discovered and which is clear and simple to everyone. Indeed it is a return to the evangelical values, not in the Catholic sense, mind you, but in a genuinely Christian sense. Indeed, in a cultural sense. . .

*But isn't there something romantic about this flight to the mountains, this return to the purity of nature?*

Not at all: if anything it's a biblical return. This man who searches for old iron buried in the ground since World War One and finds human skeletons . . . Our culture has no place for the old or for the very young, it's a place for sterile people who don't know how to communicate any more. That's why I am happy to return to the people in the mountains. That's the world I come from, a peasant world where things have to be explained simply and clearly. If you speak to them in the language of the sophisticated intellectual, of the masturbator of the intellect, they will fail to understand you and what you stand for. What is more, you won't understand them, and if you don't understand them you will be failing to understand the reality of our times, a world far from our cultural drawing-rooms full of people who invent life and never share in the real experience of living.

That's why I say that the cinema is the key to life for me. *Indeed it is a way of life.* Each one of us leaves behind him certain tokens of his existence, certain landmarks. He who builds houses, he who sweeps the streets, he who does the humble job of making bolts which will be screwed anonymously, he who makes films, he who leaves certain ideas as an inheritance. I leave behind me this life which I live in the company of others who participate in my life as I try to participate in theirs. And the cinema is the token of my participation.

*You are something of an outsider in the Italian cinema world. Is this due to the fact that you don't live in Rome?*

My answer to that continues what I was saying before. Living in Milan means my rejection of a suffocating professionalism, the prospect of remaining always on the stage and never going down into the stalls, amongst the people.

*It's easier in Milan then?*

It's more just. Where did our friends Shakespeare and Molière, who knew something about the Commedia dell'Arte, get their inspiration? From those travelling players who wrote and acted and lived amongst the people. One of the defects of Italian cinema and of professional life in general, and probably not only in Italy, is to shut oneself up in one's own room with the labels of scriptwriter, director, poet, stuck on the door outside. Not to take part in life. At the most one gives a glance outside the window to see what is going on in the street below. But one must go down there to the streets.

*How do you manage to do this?*

Living with other people from day to day, taking part in everybody else's lives. When I go out in the morning I don't only meet other directors or scriptwriters or cameramen, people who talk to me about camera angles and set-ups. I meet the workman, the postman, the professional man . . .

*Did UN CERTO GIORNO come from this kind of contact?*

It was born this way. I had a basic theme as in the Commedia dell'Arte. Or as in jazz. My theme was that of man responsible in the face of his own reality. What did I discover in my reality, my everyday reality in the city of Milan? I discovered this world of advertising, these town-criers of the consumer society who convince you that you want to possess certain products. These intellectuals—artists, scientists, psychologists, designers, blurb writers—who are at the service of consumer goods, interested me in particular for what they revealed about human responsibility. I approached these people, provoked them, almost without their knowing. And I gradually constructed my film from their stories. I put them in a position to relive their daily lives, putting to the test their responsibility towards the world.

Brunetto del Vita, my protagonist, collaborated almost without knowing it. I would shoot a scene with him which was inspired by conversations I had had with him, using dialogue and events which were from his life, but which I had rewritten. So much so that at one point, halfway through shooting, he suddenly said to me, 'You know, I think this character resembles me a bit too much.' 'No,' I said, 'It's a coincidence.' As he wasn't a fool he caught on, he recognised the real Brunetto del Vita in the Brunetto del Vita I had 'invented' for the film. But he was happy in the end. He and his wife told me afterwards that the film had done them a lot of good, helped them to understand each other better.

That was the way I worked throughout the film. Take the boy with the beard. The artist who has an affair with the girl who is with Bruno when the accident happens. Everything the boy with the beard says and does was invented on the spot. This wasn't *cinéma vérité*, in which you accept whatever reality is thrown at you. I was at the disposition of this particular reality and I provoked it in order to carry forward the theme that interested me. From this reality I squeezed out what interested me and proposed it in the way I wanted it. But it was still reality.

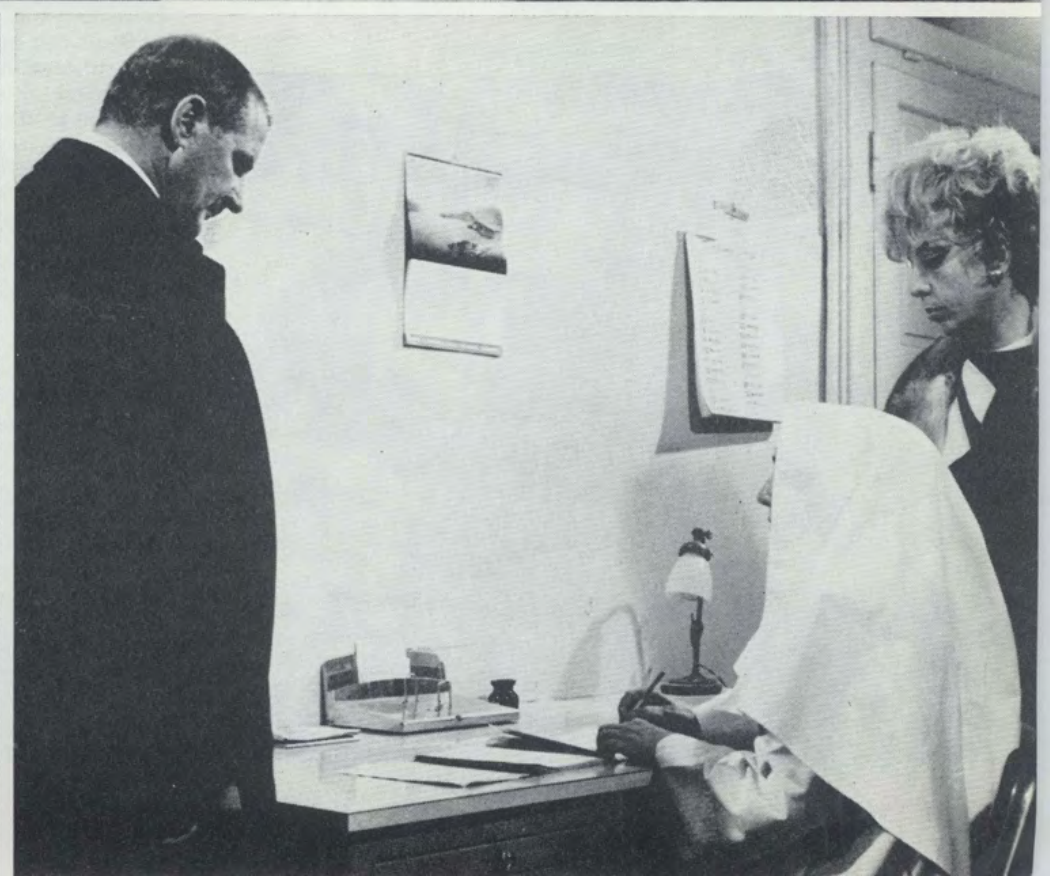
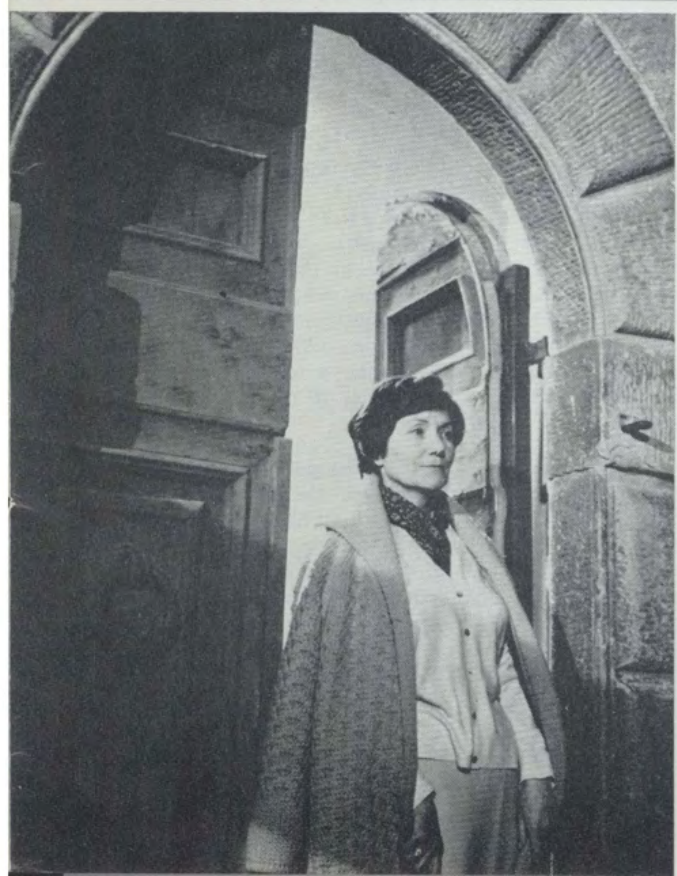
*Is that why you don't like to work with professional actors?*

It's a question of ethics. When I say that the cinema must be taken as seriously as one takes living, I am thinking of an educational cinema, but not of course in the didactic sense. I mean an educational cinema in which other people participate, educational in the true sense of the word. If I communicate to you an experience of mine which I have taken possession of to the point of being able to communicate it to you, you participate in my experience in an equal measure by adding your own experience to mine. So if I am making a cinema of truth—not *cinéma vérité* mark you—I use real facts of life not to arouse the spectator's curiosity but to communicate the truth. It's perfectly true that today women are more promiscuous, husbands are more unfaithful, there's more depravity than ever. But it is not by reproducing all this on the screen that you arrive at the truth; it is in searching for the reasons behind the individual tragedies.

If I use professional actors as intermediaries, I lose the chance to convey the truth, because those actors are followed by the public not for the characters they represent on the screen but because the actors themselves are a model of success in our society. They are heroes from the start even if they are the vanquished ones in the film. The psychological consolation for the spectator is just this: the character is only vanquished on the screen. The hero-star will remain a hero-star in the spectator's mind. Remember the famous theatrical anecdote of the old ham actor who dies on the stage as Othello? And from the gallery they shout to him 'Bravo! Die again!' In that anecdote is the reply to your question about using actors. But I should add that this is the first time I've talked openly on the subject, so forgive me if I am not so clear as perhaps I ought to be.

*No, it's quite clear. This is the whole basis of neo-realism and is even behind the way that Fellini works, and he after all is not a neo-realist. But surely there are times when the actor's art, or*

OPPOSITE: SCENES FROM "UN CERTO GIORNO".  
FAR RIGHT: BRUNETTO DEL VITA. RIGHT: MARIA CROSIGNANI.



let's say, his craft, can be an essential element, like the contribution of the lighting cameraman or the composer or the designer?

In the theatre, yes. In the theatre the actor is the right intermediary for the interpretation of a character. In the cinema as I intend it—which doesn't mean that I exclude other ways of making films—if I want to show a tree, I take a real tree. In the theatre I give the idea of a tree by the symbol of a tree. If in the cinema I want to show a motor car, a house, a street, I go out with my camera and photograph these things. And if I want a scavenger who makes a living out of digging for scrap metal left over from World War One, then I look for someone who has done that job. When we were looking for an old man of indefinable age for *I Recuperanti* we had great difficulty. Somebody suggested taking one of those amateur dialect actors who abound in the Veneto. But that would have meant using someone who maybe was a bank clerk during the day and put on a wig and make-up in the evening, and I didn't want this kind of phoney intermediary.

One day when we were looking for locations we went into an inn on the outskirts of one of these lonely mountain villages, a place we thought would be useful for the film. And there sitting in a corner was Toni Lunardi, celebrating his eightieth birthday, drinking happily by himself. He didn't ask who we were, naturally he hadn't any idea we were film people. He talked to us willingly, told us things about himself and his life in the mountains. We realised immediately that Toni was just the person we were looking for. He had lived in the mountains all his life, had himself worked for years as a scavenger. He had that baggage of experience which the character we had 'invented' in our script should carry with him. The real Toni then took over from our literary creation. Of the thousand things he said ad lib as we were shooting maybe only a dozen were used in the final track, but they were elements which added richness because they came from the truth of his life.

But I didn't let the personality of Toni submerge me. I simply put myself at the disposal of Toni's reality. As author, I became the intermediary. I made certain choices, drawing out what interested me. For example, we wrote a scene in which he described a battle assault of World War One and the tragic sight of young recruits going in to face the ruthless machine-gun fire. As he finished telling the story, he paused and then out of his own head Toni added, 'War is an ugly beast who roams and roams around the whole wide world and never even stops to eat or sleep.' What an image! The idea of this wild beast roaming the world and never stopping

to sleep or eat! And then there were his songs. If I go to look for him in the village where he lives, people don't say they've seen Toni, they say they've heard him. He's always singing.

*What was Toni's reaction when he saw the finished film?*

He enjoyed himself like any other spectator. He wasn't looking at himself. Half the time when we were filming he didn't realise we had the cameras there. He'd never been in a cinema or watched television. This was not *cinéma vérité*, you see. It was a character on whom an intermediary had been at work.

*Is it his own voice then?*

No, except that is for the songs. We found a voice which matched perfectly. It would have been too difficult for him to dub, and as this was for television we had to have a clean soundtrack. Frankly, I hate dubbing. I am a fanatic for live sound. My first film, *Time Stood Still*, was live sound and it distresses me that for one reason or another, usually involving production costs, it has never been possible again. But I am determined to return to live sound for my next film. Dubbing is another ignoble betrayal of truth. You know, I would have liked to do live sound on *Un Certo Giorno*, but unfortunately I was a victim of my own system: the people who were appearing in that film were all doing the jobs which they do in the film and often in the places where they live and work, so they could give me very little of their time. This meant it was impossible to worry about sound. And to get them to dub themselves would have been a practical impossibility even if they had had the technical ability.

*So your only experience with professional actors is when you dub your films?*

Yes. I must say that I get on with them all right, even if they do try to resolve everything on a 'professional' level. Naturally they can't take part in the experience of the characters, so it means re-inventing, without the real authenticity.

*You did have one go with a professional actor, Rod Steiger. Was that why you didn't feel happy about the film on Pope John?*

No, it was not Steiger's fault. It was mine. Damn it, how I hate myself for making a mess of that film. What a chance I missed. I think the idea behind the film was right. But my mistake was in trying to make a film that was all thought. You can't just put a man sitting there and try to convey his thoughts with words and images of the places where he lived. Maybe I was intimidated by the greatness of Pope John. The whole film should have been done in the spirit of that scene in Venice when he goes to fetch the drunken priest. That was fine because it was a moment of truth, a human fact. The cinema of ideas can only be expressed through man's suffering. And that suffering has to be rendered by the flesh. Then it becomes a dialogue of universal communication. The suffering of man is a universal fact.

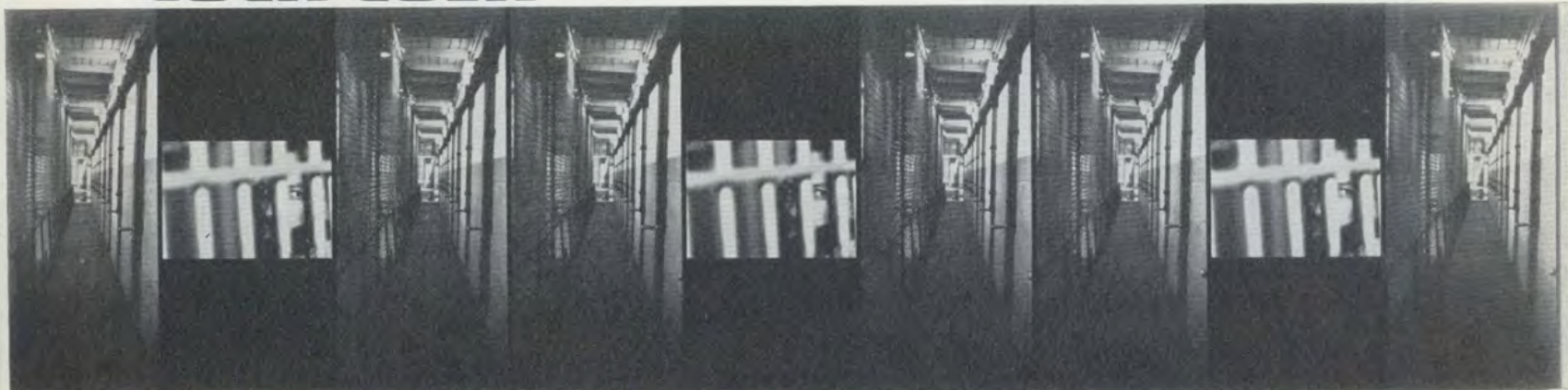
*These words and Olmi's 'confession' about the failure of his Pope John film prompt me to conclude the conversation by asking if he can explain why there is no real valid Catholic culture in Italy. In the film world, for example, directors like Fellini seem obsessed by their Catholic upbringing but they are non-believers, whereas a Pasolini tries to come to terms with Christianity and only succeeds in emphasising his own contradictions. Olmi reflects a moment and, looking out of the window to the cupola of St. Peter's which has loomed over us all the afternoon, replies:*

Maybe we are too close to the Vatican. In the same way that a shoemaker doesn't talk about holed shoes, we are here in the cradle of Catholicism so we don't like to think too much about it. But that's fine for me. All the problems that are emerging today with such dramatic force in the Catholic world have always been there but have been deliberately put aside. Their presence is felt all the more because they have been hidden for so long. The Dutch are more prepared than we are for facing the problems of the Catholic Church. We are afraid, perhaps.

TONI LUNARDI (LEFT) IN "I RECUPERANTI".



# COCA COLA



## AND THE GOLDEN PAVILION John Gillett

**A**PRIL 1. Impressive opening ceremony of Film Festival at the Osaka Festival Hall, a modern multi-purpose auditorium with a large bare stage, with festival flag at the back and a single podium in the middle for speakers. Rather unexpectedly, the delegations are ushered in through a labyrinth of underground corridors and placed in sunken orchestra pit, until an outburst of fanfares signals the pit to be slowly raised to the level of the audience. When they spot Claudia Cardinale (who seems pleased to be out of the dark pit), frenzy breaks out. All the time (even during the speeches) lush stereo music swamps the theatre. Very convivial reception in the evening with huge ice centre-piece in the form of an angler, and every kind of Japanese food. Attempt to talk to Shinoda without an interpreter; he tries very hard and manages to communicate that he was Ozu's assistant for several years.

APRIL 2. Have first look at Japanese TV on set installed in hotel bedroom (two NHK channels and five commercial). Rather blue colour and very much a Western mixture of Top of the Pops, quizzes, language lessons (done very slowly), foreign films (a dubbed Burt Lancaster in *Apache*), and an unknown Japanese film with a rape scene which would have horrified Mrs. Whitehouse. Jingly adverts exact copy of our own; and a studio samurai production done with considerable flair and much Kurosawa-like sword play.

Rapt audience at evening showing of *Oh! What a Lovely War*. Although I am told the Japanese subtitles are adequate, this is an almost untranslatable film, and a lot of the sourer jokes went for nothing. Tackled a group of young Japanese students afterwards who were discussing it avidly; apparently they were familiar with most of the tunes but had never heard the words before.

APRIL 3. First, murky sight of Expo in pouring rain, but all Japan seems to be there nevertheless; looking down from one of the parapets, I see a panorama of hundreds of multi-coloured umbrellas as the crowds patiently shift forward. After a brief look at the French Pavilion (very dark and full of little television screens), I make for the Fuji Pavilion where I have a pass. Here is one of the Expo's main showpieces—a huge hall with a moving circular platform on which the audience stands, a centre area with 28 slide projectors throwing images on walls and ceiling, and a giant screen at the end on which a 210 mm. multi-image film is shown (from one projector!). The work of a joint Japanese-Canadian team, this has the customary brotherhood of man theme but with often savage images of rioting, thalidomide babies and other con-

temporary horrors. The fully choral and orchestral accompaniment (through 126 speakers) must be the loudest stereo score ever; we all troop down the moving staircase at the end somewhat shaken and a little deaf. Come back in the hotel bus with Andrzej Wajda, who whispers that the Expo is 'so strange and childish'.

APRIL 5. Up to now the Festival has presented either minor works or films seen at other festivals, but today brings *L'Enfant Sauvage* and personal appearances by Truffaut and Jeanne Moreau. Truffaut's latest work is a little gem. The true story of the efforts of a French doctor in the late 18th century to rehabilitate a wild boy found in a forest, it documents the various stages of the treatment without a trace of sentimentality or overstatement. Truffaut himself as the doctor and Jean-Pierre Cargol as the boy play impeccably together and the country backgrounds and period interiors are full of loving homages to both Renoirs. Truffaut also makes an entirely fresh use of that old silent film device, the iris, closing down on faces and objects with masterly timing.

APRIL 7. Day trip to Kyoto with Eric Rhode. Helpful taxi-driver/guide enables us to take in a dozen temples and gardens in various parts of the city. Easy to evoke the shade of Mizoguchi as we walk along heavily shaded passage ways which suddenly lead out to exquisite courtyards, with the smell of incense never far away. Even stranger contrast when we pass by a fortress wall which might have been a set from the *Nibelungen*.

The Golden Pavilion is, for me, the loveliest sight of all, glowing softly in the late afternoon light with mountains behind and light rain flecking the river in front. Ichikawa got a lot of it into his film, of course, especially the contrast between the serenity of the temples and the noisy bustle of the town centre with its gaudy cinema posters and clutter of 'Drink Coca Cola' signs. And the past evaporated entirely on our return journey when much running and shouting at a traffic stop was followed by the removal of a dejected young man by the police.

APRIL 8. Return to Expo, this time in sunny weather. First stop, the Automobile Pavilion for a triple-screen production by Teshigahara. Unfortunately, this proves disappointing—a kind of futuristic slapstick comedy with much wild posturing and dancing. Teshigahara's technical skill is always apparent (goldfish are suddenly thrown upwards from the middle screen on to a mini-screen above), but his sense of humour seems limited. A more 'total' experience is offered by the Mitsubishi Pavilion where, on the inevitable moving staircase, you pass through mirrored halls on which all kinds of pheno-

*John Gillett has recently been in Japan to attend the Osaka Festival and, with the assistance of the Japan Film Library Council, to do research for a forthcoming book.*

ABOVE: 210 MILLIMETRE AT EXPO. ACTUAL FRAME SIZE.



TOMU UCHIDA'S "THE EARNEST FIGHT WITH SWORDS"

mena are projected—typhoons, volcanoes, space travel, placid flower gardens and forests, and a 'mist screen' which smells rather peculiar. High-class gimmickry, perhaps, but truly enveloping. The British Pavilion, which seems to be doing a roaring trade in publications, has no films but concentrates instead on our technological achievements; the design is attractively tubular and there is a welcome absence of quaintness.

Much of Expo looks like a cross between Disneyland and Things to Come (certainly the overhead funicular cars might have been designed by Menzies) and everywhere one sees yellow domes and vertical tubes. Groups of Japanese visitors, often led by a little man with a flag, scurry from one exotic sight to another, and dozens of tired children huddle over Expo lunch boxes in the many rest areas. Considering the huge crowds, the roads are remarkably litter-free. Loudspeakers suddenly erupt with announcements or Western music ('The Desert Song' was a favourite on this day), and I finally manage to cadge a ride on an Expo taxi even though it takes me to the wrong place. The whole extravagant panorama is much more trendy than, say, Brussels in 1958; looking down some of the avenues, one seems to be experiencing a wild surrealistic dream; and then, just around the corner, there is a gorgeous Eastern pagoda which makes the rest look plain ugly.

Afternoon relaxation at the Bunraku Puppet Theatre—a wide, letter-box shape stage and a very complex historical saga with each puppet brilliantly controlled by three black-shrouded men in full view of the audience (Shinoda, of course, adapted the device in *Double Suicide*). Throaty narration and samisen music from the side platform; sections of the audience break into applause after some audacious hand or leg movement. I find the manipulators more interesting to watch than the puppets but, even so, have had enough after about an hour.

APRIL 9. Swedish night at the Festival and a minor scandal.

Rumours had circulated that *I Am Curious—Yellow* had been subjected to heavy cuts by the customs authorities (despite Sjöman's objections), but the house was packed nevertheless by an audience hopefully excited by all the pre-publicity. As well as half-a-dozen minor cuts, all the controversial sex scenes in fact were removed; but before each major deletion a title was inserted stating that the scene was contrary to Japanese conventions. These announcements prompted some shuffling and shouts from the audience but there was no major disturbance. In similar circumstances at Cannes they would probably have ripped the theatre up, for the cuts made nonsense of the narrative. The Japanese audience, however, exacted a rather sweet revenge—they left in complete silence without a trace of applause.

APRIL 10. The Festival ends with the only Japanese film visible during the fortnight: Shinoda's *The Scandalous Adventures of Buraikan*. After the Bunraku influence in *Double Suicide*, he has turned now to Kabuki themes and sends them up in a lavish 'Scope/Eastman Colour pantomime. All sorts of influences abound: a jazz score combined with Japanese instrumentation, black jokes à la *Pugni in Tasca* (the hero casually drops his mother from a mountain top into a river), and seductions amid burning buildings. It is all very lively, with gorgeous costumes and colour, but not very funny. This kind of stylisation (also with a theatrical background) was perfectly achieved by Ichikawa in *An Actor's Revenge*. Shinoda just lacks the overall control and flair to equal it.

Sayonara Party in the evening with fond farewells all round. Mary McCarthy turns up, clearly excited by the Japanese film. Nostalgic ending with playing of Auld Lang Syne (now almost a Japanese folk-tune) from small orchestra in balcony. We are all presented with flowers at the exit and I distribute mine to line of young actresses, trying to bow correctly as I go.

APRIL 12/13. Arrived in Tokyo from Osaka and found complete contrast. Tokyo is very modern, bustling city with marvellous looking stores and a plethora of dainty coffee shops with names like 'Rimbaud' and 'Reggies'. Viewings kindly arranged by Mrs. Kawakita and Mr. Shimizu of the Japan Film Library Council start off with some disappointing material but pick up quickly with *Five Scouts* (1938) by the veteran Tasaka; a print, incidentally, recently returned from America after confiscation by the occupation authorities. On the surface, a patriotic, sentimental Sino/Japanese war drama (with some curious pre-echoes of *The Burmese Harp*), it is more remarkable for the kind of stylistic flamboyance usually associated with post-war Japanese cinema—virtuoso tracking shots following the soldiers across fields (had he seen *All Quiet?*), a very sharp cutting rhythm and even some crane shots in the Army camp. Considering that the intention was presumably inspirational, the overall tone is surprisingly dark.

APRIL 14. Heinosuke Gosho day. Saw *Inn at Osaka* (1954), a detailed study of interlinked relationships which doesn't quite equal *Four Chimneys*, and *Seasons of the Meiji Period* (1968), a feature-length marionette film with some pretty colour and design and a splendidly animated ballroom scene (like all puppet films, though, it goes on rather too long). Off then to nearby hotel—with tall Japanese hostesses in silver mini-skirts—for an interview with Mr. Gosho, who turns out to be a lively talker with a wide knowledge of world cinema. A veteran of 96 films, he made the first Japanese talkie ('although I didn't know anything about sound') and has worked for all the major companies since the 1920s. His great love for American cinema (he lists Lubitsch, Stroheim, Chaplin and Clarence Brown among his favourites and he saw *The Marriage Circle* 24 times) was partly responsible for his small wartime output: the authorities thought his work had too much American feeling and was also mainly concerned with women.

His account of the Japanese industry throughout the years suggests some striking parallels with America—directors were compelled to make several commercial films to get finance for something really personal. But he smiled happily when referring to the 1920s and '30s ('I was the new wave then'). Cinema, for Gosho, is essentially humanistic. Again like certain veteran American directors, he finds himself out of place in the contemporary set-up with all the old producers gone ('I don't want to make erotic films and that's what they demand now'), and has set himself up as an independent. 'I have my old staff and several scripts but the money is hard to get. Just say I keep on trying.'

APRIL 16. Two early 1930s silent films by Ozu: *Chorus of Tokyo* and *Passing Fancy*. Both splendid, but slightly preferred the first with its funny children (straight out of *I Was Born, but . . .*), sardonic office scenes and American flavoured humour (Ozu must have known Lubitsch as well). Very nicely judged tracking shots through the city and lively, detailed playing. Also sombre 1939 Mizoguchi—*Story of the Last Chrysanthemums*—a doomed love story with Kabuki theatre backgrounds and some of the longest takes (alternating static set-ups with five-minute travellings along roads and rivers) that he ever used.

APRIL 18. A solemn pilgrimage with Mrs. Kawakita and Eric Rhode to Ozu's tomb near the Enkakuji Temple in Kamakura, about an hour's train ride from Tokyo. The cemetery is on a hill and Ozu's grave is just a simple square plot with a marble block bearing the word 'nothing' on the front, and on the side a Zen Buddhist epitaph concerning the oneness and continuance of life and death. Drums and chanting from below, and we move from the cemetery to the temple itself where a popular festival is taking place, with gay banners, prancing men in coloured shirts carrying a wooden temple on sticks, groups of bemused tourists and food and drink stands on the side. A Dovzhenko-like juxtaposition, in fact. We take a last look at the cemetery as we leave in a soft rain, the grey sight enlivened only by a few splashes of colour from the little flower pots.

APRIL 20. Useful discussion with two critics, Mr. Akira Iwasaki and Mr. Tadao Sato. In answer to our questions

about the best periods in Japanese cinema, both agree that the 1930s launched a number of major careers and produced a left-wing cinema as a kind of protest against the Sino/Japanese war. Following the second world war, the U.S. occupation brought 'mixed benefits'. Some officials thought that the Japanese industry should be destroyed, others wanted to turn it into a Hollywood film market, and script controls were rigid. Regarding present developments, both critics expressed some hopes for the new wave (Hani, Imamura, Oshima, etc.) and hinted that younger audiences were deliberately reacting against the old guard. (As we already know, Ozu suffered an eclipse until he was rediscovered by European critics.)

We also uncovered some intriguing likes and dislikes. Mr. Iwasaki clearly favoured the social realist school (Imai, Yamamoto) and preferred Ichikawa's *Conflagration* and *Fires on the Plain* to the Olympic film and *Alone on the Pacific*; also *Ikiru* rather than *Sanjuro* and *Yojimbo*. Mr. Sato is a considerable Ozu scholar (he is at present working on a multi-volume study) and filled in a number of details on the last two great Ozu films we saw—*The Only Son* (1936, his first sound film) and his main wartime production (*The Toda Brother and his Sisters*, 1941). The former completely discards the comic tone of the silent pieces and, in plot development, looks forward to *Tokyo Story*; the war itself intrudes only briefly in *The Toda Brother*, when one character goes off to Manchuria. Uncharacteristically, it deals with an upper-class family in mixed Japanese/Western settings, and the scene when the family gathers together for a snapshot on the lawn would be obligatory for any Ozu anthology.

APRIL 21. Trip to Toho Studios, a vast plot with 12 stages, about 600 staff and, at this time, four films in production (two on the stages, two on location). First stop, a tiny hut interior where yet another veteran director, Tomu Uchida, is shooting *The Earnest Fight with Swords*. Surprisingly quiet atmosphere compared with English studios, as Uchida, who has a great smile and looks rather like a diminutive John Huston, patiently rehearses two actors crouched over a little fire. One of them continually fluffs and has difficulty with an overfull pot of sake, but they do two rehearsals and print the first take (apparently one take is common practice in Japanese studios). Set-ups are changed quickly, and again comparatively noiselessly, and when they start on another long dialogue rehearsal we move out to the lot.

Facing us is an enormous inland lake (used for naval dramas, among others) complete with a little island and a false horizon in the form of a bright blue backing about 300 feet across. Nearby is a somewhat begrimed model battleship and a variety of bizarre props, including battered old cars and what looks like a broken down organ. Passing another stage where they are constructing a huge, winding staircase we come to the prop room, bulging with samurai swords (made of bamboo), imitation sawn-off arms and little piles of clothes

SHINODA'S "THE SCANDALOUS ADVENTURES OF BURAIKAN"



and shoes (some for the new Kurosawa), neatly labelled with the characters' names. One disappointment: Godzilla and the rest of Toho's monsters were not visible, as they were locked up and in the process of being dismantled. Final impressions: Toho may lack the surface glamour (and the shining paint) of European studios, but with an average shooting time of 40-50 days, they are obviously geared to turn out lots of films pretty quickly.

Return in late afternoon for meeting with Kon Ichikawa, who seems to be in great form, jumping up and down with laughter when he feels we overpraise him and smoking away furiously. Why had he only made documentaries during the last six years? 'It is necessary to have a stable world to make good fiction films; there is a weakness in the arts now but I feel better times are coming. I have about twenty subjects in mind and I must make one soon for personal reasons.' Looking back on his career, he placed *Burmese Harp* slightly lower than some European critics; for him, *Conflagration* was the turning point. 'Then I realised what film-making really meant and became more objective. Life should be viewed from further away.'

On asking about our favourite films, we got some characteristic one-line answers. *The Key*: 'It was made for money.' *An Actor's Revenge*: 'Pretty good, and it was shot in 40 days.' *Alone on the Pacific*: 'Dissatisfied with it; if you make a film about someone crossing an ocean, you should really go with him.' *Tokyo Olympiad*: 'Certainly a personal film, but I don't like sport.' On the subject of Japanese studio methods, he revealed that he is one of those directors with a right to re-take and averages about 30 'cuts' a day. He listed Lubitsch, Mankiewicz (*Letter to Three Wives*) and Mizoguchi among his past favourites; Pasolini was the biggest influence now (*The Gospel*, *Oedipus Rex*) and he also liked *If . . .* and Walt Disney. He kept his best barb in reserve until we were about to say goodbye: 'You know, contemporary French cinema (except Bresson) has made the whole world bad.'

APRIL 23. Two social occasions. Preview of new (and rather dreary) social realist drama by Imai followed by a reception enlivened by Mark Donskoy (in Japan lecturing on Lenin) who embraces everyone in sight and communicates vigorously in a mixture of Russian and German. Later in the evening, first visit to commercial Japanese cinema—première of *Incident at Blood Pass*, an enjoyable, conventional samurai piece by Inagaki which he was dubbing at Toho only two days before. Huge, modern auditorium absolutely packed with invited audience who give great reception to Mifune and other leading players when they introduce themselves from the stage. The only real difference from a London première is the sight of half-a-dozen bare-legged drummers struggling to get their instruments into an already crowded lift.

APRIL 24. Final day of viewings produces some really sensational silent material by two important pioneers—a collection of sword fight snippets from the works of Daisuke Ito

and a lengthy feature about American/Japanese relations in the 19th century by Tomiyasu Ikeda, charmingly titled *Reverence for the Emperor and Expulsion of Foreigners*. Ito is sometimes referred to as the Japanese Eisenstein. From these excerpts it is difficult to place his narrative style, but technically he is clearly a wizard—fantastically rapid tracking shots and quick pans, often shot from a great height, follow masses of battling warriors from one temple setting to another. Ikeda's film, though more static, boasts several fight scenes with backward dolly shots and even a 360° pan. Difficult to sum up everything we saw in those two weeks, as I have mentioned only the major items in this diary. Ozu, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa remain indisputably at the top; Goshu and Kinoshita seem more variable second-liners; Yoshimura (on the evidence of one film) has a gentle, almost Italianate talent; Naruse too often descends into soap opera. Then there are other veterans like Tasaka and Uchida about whom we know practically nothing . . . Will it ever be possible to get the Japanese cinema in perspective?

APRIL 26. Brief look round the NHK radio and television studios, probably the most palatial and certainly the best equipped in the world. One studio of 1,200 square metres boasts 192 overhead lights operated by remote control, and a jumbo-sized crane. Next door, a delightful standing set for a family drama (probably an equivalent of *The Archers*), designed with that authentic Japanese eye for detail (as we passed, a prop man was carefully rearranging some paper snow in the back garden). Jazz band kits and psychedelic backcloths in other studios suggest why Japanese TV exerts such a hold on the younger generation. 'We make everything here ourselves' says our guide proudly, pointing out a little room with flowers of all hues in pots and running water, and a wardrobe department full of busily sewing ladies. Kinoshita told us earlier that he had been producing TV series for five years. How valuable it would be if the BBC could obtain examples of his and other directors' work—at least one would see what they made of all this equipment.

The evening brought a splendid climax to the whole trip—a meeting with Akira Kurosawa who, although just two days into his new film, courteously agreed to see me. As I was advised not to question him about the misfortunes of *Tora, Tora, Tora*, we started off immediately with the new picture. 'Perhaps you should translate the title as *The Sound of a Streetcar*. It is a study of people living in slums in a small town; a film about their feelings and relationships but very different from *The Lower Depths*. For me, it will be a new type of film (in several episodes) but it is a little early to tell you how it will work out. We have built a complete set on a reclaimed area near Tokyo Bay and will shoot there for two months with another month in Toho Studios. We have three or four star names plus a lot of unknown people.' Kurosawa explained that the film was the first venture of an independent group called *The Four Musketeers of the Cinema* (the others being Ichikawa, Kobayashi and Kinoshita) who had each taken a pledge to make a film during 1970. 'But we have considerable financial difficulties; we borrowed from a bank and this is the first time they have helped film production. If it is a success, they will give more, so it must be a success!' (the last remark accompanied by a particularly wry smile). Apparently, the Japanese government will not subsidise independents, and the situation is further complicated by current legislation concerning authorship and rights—I have to be writer, producer and director in order to get full control.'

Questions about the prospects for young film-makers brought some particularly forthright answers: 'I agree that there are no real equivalents to the great names so far, but there is a group aged about 20 to 25 who really want to make films—and they don't know how. If there is going to be a revival, I'd like to help them. The major companies would probably destroy them, and our seniority system means that you only become a director when it is too late. Do you know that the average age of people in studios now is 39? At any rate, I have employed two young men as assistants on the new picture and we'll see how it works out.' This discussion about

*Continued on page 166*

"THE SOUND OF A STREETCAR": KUROSAWA ON THE SET





ANDREA DRAHOTA (FOREGROUND) IN "THE CONFRONTATION"

# FILM REVIEWS

## THE CONFRONTATION

**H**HEY, OUR BANNERS are unfurling in the joyful wind . . . The original Hungarian title of *The Confrontation* (Academy/Connoisseur) comes from this rallying song of the Communist youth movement in Hungary in the mid-1940s. ' . . . written on it, hey, stands Long Live Freedom! There they stand, a group of young boys and girls, with their newly acquired freedom, pressing their flushed faces against the old-fashioned wrought-iron gate of a church school, convinced about their own truth, holding a piece of red cloth which stands for the flag, their eyes shining, singing with fervour: 'Tomorrow we'll turn the whole world upside down!' The picture expresses what we all felt in those days, twenty to twenty-five years ago: not only

were we happy to be young, but to our exuberant youth we were given, without having to work out something for ourselves, a view of life, an ideology to believe in. 'In the history of the world,' says one of the boys who stage the confrontation, 'this is the first power that is honourable.' So we felt; and they too: the group that climbs over the fence to go to convince the pupils of the church school about the righteousness of their cause.

They could be the great-grandchildren of the condemned outlaws of *The Round-Up*; the grandchildren of the dispersed Red Army soldiers of *The Red and the White*. They got ready-made what their elders were fighting for and gave their lives for. Even their rallying songs they inherited. 'Rise, you Red proletariat, you star-spangled soldiers!' It is perhaps significant that the original Hungarian title of *The Red and the White* ('Star-spangled Soldiers') is also a quote from a fiery, romantic song of the Movement: 'Great tasks are awaiting you: the palaces are still standing!' And when the remnants of Sándor's band are given the news that the Emperor has granted a reprieve to their leader, spontaneously they break into a song: 'Long live the Freedom of Hungary!'

Whereby they finally betray their identity and, blindfolded, are dragged away. Those star-spangled soldiers of the song massacre each other long before they can embark on the 'great tasks'. And their young successors in *The Confrontation*, who would like to turn the whole world upside down, will soon see their romantic ideals crumble to pieces. The real confrontation is not with the pupils of the church college (and the action of the film centres on the various stages of this confrontation, from peaceful persuasion to active terror) but with their own idealism, which is ultimately incompatible with the very nature, the totalitarian ideals, of the regime which gave them their songs and their right to sing them. They will soon have to adapt themselves to the rules of the game ('How? Everyone will

have to decide that for himself') if they want to survive both morally and physically.

Again, the subject is the gulf between ideals, and the way they fail to materialise. The crowd that unfurls flags, knocks down palaces and dances with arms held tightly together as if a chain, never to come apart, the crowd consists of *people*. When their arms do, finally, come apart they turn into individuals who have the equal potential of becoming both oppressors and oppressed, victims or victimisers, and if requested change roles without difficulty. And the gradual disintegration of the group, the way these young, defenceless, genuine believers, proudly upholding their newly gained freedom, become the potential cog-wheels in an enormous bureaucratic machinery—this process disturbs and hurts perhaps even more than the senseless, casual massacres in the other two films. We can observe step by step, and with the inevitability of the process as only Jancsó can express it, the way a genuine belief that could, perhaps, really have accomplished those 'great tasks', is harnessed and deflated by the regime and forced to sink into the grey anonymity of the political everyday.

The way such ideals turned into bitter disillusionment led to the revolt of 1956. But Jancsó's film is necessarily sceptical even about this great, seemingly immaculate historic moment; causes, even *such* causes, can gobble up their own creatures and achievements. His film ends on exactly the same frame with which it began: you could splice it together into a vicious circle, the same story repeats itself again and again under different circumstances. For it is relatively easy to link arms, to sing songs and even to capture barricades—but it is practically impossible to maintain power in a way that is worthy of the ideals. 'The terror reacts upon those who exercise it.' 'What is the role of the individual in history?'—the young Communists pose the question to their supposed opponents at the

church school, but soon they'll have to ask themselves for an answer in a regime which pretends to be their very own ('I am a policeman and I represent your State').

In an atmosphere like this you cannot just dump a pile of old religious books in the courtyard and stop there; in the end there'll always be someone prepared to throw a burning match to it. If a doctrine happens to fail there is always a group in fresh white shirts and well-creased trousers coming forward with another doctrine. An enemy will have to be produced artificially to stir up the people from their apathy of 'sly fascism'—and a traditional rallying song is immediately at their disposal: 'To strangle us, to ruin us—that's the plan of the wicked rascals! The process is endless. It is inevitable. And it is practised to the accompaniment of rhythmic applause, to singing and dancing.

Such singing and dancing dominate the film, keep it in a constant movement like the wind waves a flag, and remind us of the way in which complicated life-and-death issues that concern us all are brought down all the time to the level of captivating, deceptive simplification, turning us into onlookers instead of protagonists. The young people in the film march in with songs, convince their opponents with songs, frighten and humiliate them with songs, fight against their own mounting doubts by singing songs; and when they finally betray their ideals, there's a song ready for that purpose, too. These songs express the quality of the ideals and their cocky readiness to fight for them, and at the same time have a threatening, potentially destructive and—in the songs about the old Jew and in 'Come on then, stab and slaughter!'—an even overtly fascist power. They transform the film into a kind of ritual; as exuberant (though, at least to me, never really genuinely jolly) as it is frightening.

At the same time it is through this incessant singing and dancing that Jancsó achieves a rich stylised texture for the film. It acts as an alienating device. Everything

here is given in signs, in appearances rather than in depth. Flags, songs, shirts red, grey and white; the stone cross and the red cloth over it; the ecclesiastic habits; the policemen's jeep; the text of the official regulation whereby Jews had to wear the yellow star: these are the expressive means of a morality play, a parable or a mime-play or even a *tableau vivant*. It is a cold film and it is not easy to come to terms with it after a single viewing. Once again, the camera is rowing up and down, following and recording the action seemingly impassively, symbolising our own helplessness to take part in the happenings and reducing us to onlookers.

Everything that happens in the frame is potentially suspect and dangerous; that jeep, for instance, that now enters in the distance as a tiny, harmless dot, brings out the goose-pimples on your back: what is it coming for? That heap of books in the courtyard that the camera now brings into frame slowly, dispassionately: is it possible that they are going to burn them? And the drama of a sharp confrontation of ideals acted out by aggressive young people is photographed in a tired, yellow, late afternoon sunshine (with Jancsó's favourite icy wind blowing again in the distance): disillusionment is imminent and inevitable.

All this adds up to a fascinating, remarkable film; an attempt by an artist, in a political climate where this may be more than difficult, to remain true to himself and talk with honesty and integrity about the true problems of his people. But can this be possible? Can he 'get away with it'? *The Confrontation* shows us an apparatus in which decisions are made behind the scenes and the individual has to fall in, obey and not ask questions. How can the artist invite us then for a truly courageous dialogue? If the police inspector is watching over how people should act and feel, how can Jancsó and his film be an exception? And even be shown at international film festivals? Can the regime afford such a bargaining? Or does Jancsó himself fall victim to the very process he puts on to the

screen, telling us not the truth but only a useful truth—and in this case how can we trust him? 'It is easy to be a revolutionary now,' says the Jewish boy to the protagonist in the red shirt, 'with the Russian tanks backing you up.'

And yet, the way Jancsó tells his stories, the obstinacy with which he tells them again and again, the constant invitation to dialogue in which, perhaps, one single sentence of genuine insight will illuminate the whole unspoken truth—they make his search, his repeated challenge to his people to face up to themselves as they really are, an act of authentic courage. Somewhere between the romantic songs we used to sing and the curt, ruthless orders of the policemen there is the voice of hard, caring intellect: the voice of Jancsó and his fellow artists.

ROBERT VAS

## LEO THE LAST

'WHY CAN'T YOU tell lies, like other people?' asks Leo's mistress petulantly; and perhaps the real weakness of John Boorman's *Leo the Last* (United Artists) is that the question is never answered. The forty-year-old expatriate prince, uncharacteristically, is neither the playboy kind nor the dedicated toiler; the disappearance of his kingdom and of the family fortunes has left him merely with an immense naïveté, and his effectiveness as a mouthpiece for what is in other respects a characteristic Boorman message is muffled and distorted by what, to be strictly realistic, seems a contradiction between cause and effect.

Not, of course, that Boorman has made a realistic film; for *Leo the Last*, unlike his previous parables, displays its allegory on its sleeve. In an isolated community where, as with *Catch Us If You Can* and *Point Blank*, the conventional forces of law and order are an unhelpful intrusion, the prevailing system of injustice and intolerance is torn apart by the disrupting presence of an outsider ignorant both of the game and its rules. As with *Hell in the Pacific*, a new balance is achieved after both sides have suffered violent indignities. And on a new Boorman note of optimism, this alliance survives at the end of the film: the world may not have changed (yet) but Leo's street certainly has. The princely innocent's capacity for truth has ruined his hangers-on, and while it has not exactly made the fortunes of his multiracial subjects it has at least been an effective leveller.

The coincidental resemblance to *Zab-riskie Point* in the repeated explosions of Boorman's final sequence gives *Leo the Last* an intriguing resonance. Despite the Notting Hill accents, the film encapsulates the American nightmare, swallows it at a gulp, and tries valiantly to digest it. The rape of black by white, the retaliatory blows that follow, the rich spectators who become richer no matter which side wins (Leo is ironically unaware that the people starving beneath the gaze of his spy-glass are in fact his own tenants), the first dark forerunners of revolution—Boorman, like Antonioni, is measuring a change in the wind and predicting that it will lay everything flat.

Boorman's nihilism, however, has an enthusiastic hilarity: the street-people, primitive, raucous, dotted and bizarre, inherit the earth by sheer noise and energy,

"LEO THE LAST": MARCELLO MASTROIANNI.



instinctively resisting Leo's unconscious destructiveness by turning it back on itself so that the prince blows up his own mansion and becomes one of them. His fate would not be at all reassuring were it not that the members of Leo's household are given an even less flattering portrait, particularly in the banquet scene (a surprisingly unsubtle display of greasy fingers and chomping jaws) and in the equally overplayed marriage rehearsal which concludes with Leo in the pulpit howling like a tormented mongrel. By comparison, the lecherous antique dealer (Kenneth J. Warren in fine form) or the urbane Negro pimp seem hearteningly representative of basic humanist qualities.

The most extraordinary sequence in *Leo the Last* is the nude therapy session, in which innumerable torsos plunge up and down in a swimming-bath in a search for self-awareness. Boorman films the pathetically earnest mounds of flesh from all angles, with an ambiguous curiosity in which enjoyment and head-shaking concern (his inspiration was again an American one) can both be sensed. Just as the villains in *Point Blank* all turned out to have an almost appealing defencelessness (John Vernon clinging desperately to his sheet makes a particularly relevant image), the naked aristocrats in *Leo the Last* are too ludicrous to be seen as much more than misguided—Boorman's equalisation plan is consistently the affectionate kind.

Similarly, the menace afforded by Vladek Sheybal's team of would-be revolutionaries in Leo's cellar is quickly defused by some ungainly slapstick, as the Voltairean pacifist drives them out with a hysterical sabre. Yet this soft-heartedness is perhaps a further weakness in Boorman's allegory. That we are all alike under the skin (i.e. misguided, brutal, hungry and sentimental) is a perfectly rational antidote to racialism, and goodness knows the tale needs telling humorously for a change; but to have edged so far towards hyperbole has made Boorman's microcosm a difficult one to share. With Marvin and Mifune it was relatively easy; with Mastroianni, whose fussily benign *persona* is now so familiar that it creates its own kind of insulation, the wavelength keeps wandering off the dial.

Unfailingly well photographed and edited, and with a much overlaid but splendidly adventurous soundtrack, *Leo the Last* is certainly the boldest and most original British film in many a long month. But the enigma remains that it should have been a more satisfying accomplishment than it somehow is.

PHILIP STRICK

## WOODSTOCK and MONTEREY POP

THE DEVELOPMENT of certain aspects of pop music during the Sixties has made it an ideal ground for the cross-fertilisation of avant-garde and popular art within the cinema. When Jeff Beck smashed his guitar to pieces in *Blow-Up*, what might have appeared surrealist fantasy to many at the time was, in fact, directly drawn from Antonioni's observation of The Who stage act, and Pete Townshend is quite as aware as Antonioni of the implications of this kind of auto-destruction. In a lot of ways,



"WOODSTOCK"

*Blow-Up* was the first film really to use what was happening in pop, instead of being used by it; but unfortunately it led to a nightmarish blind alley of Swinging London castrated rock films that served only to obscure the nature of its own rather tentative breakthrough.

One would therefore like very much to be able to say that *Woodstock* (Warner-Pathé) which, as almost everyone must know by now, is three hours of colour and split-screen and stereo devoted to the most spectacular of last year's pop festivals, is some kind of masterpiece, a revolutionary hybrid of commercial and underground cinema. Directed by Mike Wadleigh, who photographed *David Holzman's Diary* and with producer Bob Maurice obviously fought a courageous battle to get the project off the ground, it certainly does represent something completely new in production set-ups. Yet, for all its length (it is edited down from 120 hours of exposed stock), *Woodstock* never quite lives up to the expectations it arouses. At times it is admittedly very exciting indeed.

For the first half-hour, at least, it looks as though it is going to be a completely engulfing spatial experience; beginning with a small-screen grainy interview and then gradually accentuating the sweep and scope of each image until helicopters swoop in and out of the split-screen like giant insects, and the music begins to erupt from all sides. But very quickly it becomes clear that, despite all the enterprise of its compilers, *Woodstock* suffers, in so far as its presentation of the music is concerned, from having been shot entirely in 16 mm. Most of the double and triple screen work is excellent, quite as good as anything done in this process before, and mostly better, but after a while one has the feeling that the effect is being over-used simply to cover the absence of any real wide-screen equipment. This is particularly unfortunate in view of the trouble which has obviously been taken with the stereo sound recording. And, what is probably worse, the length of the film often seems to work against it.

Some of the footage is brilliant, but certain sequences (like the interminable shots of people sliding around in the mud) could easily have been cut.

*Woodstock* is at its best when it uses all its resources to envelop us in the festival and its music: when, for example, Roger Daltrey of The Who, photographed in shimmering abstraction by three cameras at once, gives us 'My Generation', or when a sunrise on one side of the screen is juxtaposed with lines of traffic on the other. As a work of cinematic sociology it is all too evidently suspect, especially since, only a few months after it was made, an open-air Rolling Stones concert at Altamont descended into appalling violence in which someone was clubbed to death. But it does convey quite forcefully an impression of what it is like to attend something on this scale, with the atmosphere resembling a vast religious ceremony. And Wadleigh and Maurice can't really be accused of idealising what they represent. 'Hey, we must be in heaven, man,' yells someone over the loudspeaker, but a great many of the images suggest quite the opposite: vast expanses of mud and refuse, hysterical wailing women lost or tripped out on the adulterated acid that is circulating, endless lines forming for the emergency soup kitchens.

All this makes an interesting comparison with *Monterey Pop* (Fair Enterprises), which was filmed by D. A. Pennebaker in 1967 at what was effectively the first of the present cycle of rock festivals. Both films are in the tradition of American *cinéma-vérité* (which, for reasons that would be interesting to determine, has become increasingly associated with pop), but Pennebaker's film is much shorter, and the whole atmosphere at Monterey less apocalyptic. Nevertheless Pennebaker, whose style is so much humbler than Wadleigh's, is lucky enough to have captured for his film an incredible performance by Janis Joplin, whose ecstatic, agonised blues-singing, photographed in full close-up as she pitches and dives her way through a song,

conveys more about America and its present traumas in a few minutes than a thousand shots of kids swimming in the nude or smoking joints or being interviewed. This raises the whole question, of course, of how valid either of these films are as films, when, undeniably, the best parts of both of them remain musical. And the answer must lie in the peculiar status that this kind of popular music has now developed for itself. The experience of watching Janis Joplin singing, at least as presented in this film, carries so much social and political implication that it more or less ceases to be a musical experience at all. One could be tone deaf, and still find its effect electrifying.

So, without sacrificing all the word's connotations, it wouldn't really be legitimate to describe *Woodstock* as a new kind of musical. But it does point one way in which the American cinema is developing. That a major company should back such a venture, wait for over six months for it to be edited, and then run it at three hours without an intermission, is significant in itself and can't be wholly negated by the occasionally irritating indulgence of its makers. *Woodstock* may not ultimately bridge the gulf between underground and commercial cinema, between the popular and the avant-garde, but at least it leaves a strong impression that, so far as this kind of *cinéma-vérité* is concerned, the gap will be bridged very soon.

DAVID PIRIE

## THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT

IN THE MIDST of one of its more gauche and titillatory attempts at comedy, *The Strawberry Statement* (M-G-M) tries to forestall any accusations of derivativeness by making its hero enquire 'Have you seen *The Graduate*?' While the two films are not strikingly similar, it is a suggestive comparison. *The Graduate* was able to sustain its light-hearted comic tenor throughout by studiously avoiding drugs, the draft or any other issue which might seriously have been occupying the mind of a twenty-year-old California student in the Sixties. Its error lay in simultaneously attempting to be contemporary and relevant, to genuflect to the radical movement in its spurious sequences set on the 'Berkeley' campus. By contrast, *The Strawberry Statement* does go some way towards an honest grappling with current student feeling, but its tone fluctuates wildly and in the context its efforts at *Graduate* style humour look distinctly out of place.

Simon, the protagonist of the film, is an innocent like Benjamin, but it is his initiation into the realities of politics rather than sex which here forms the subject matter. Non-committed, a rower with the college crew, he is radicalised when he drifts into a student occupation of the administration buildings and meets a girl totally dedicated to the Movement. As events proceed towards the inevitable climax, Simon becomes a vehement advocate of the student cause; finally, he is severely beaten up in the police bust. The part is played by Bruce Davison, the callous adolescent of *Last Summer*, who is here required to be several years older and a good deal more sympathetic. He lacks the comic capability which the script at times demands from him, but otherwise

his performance adequately captures the well-intentioned naiveté of the apolitical student who worked hard for his place at college and is not immediately convinced that university authority should be challenged. Opposite him is Kim Darby in a much less interesting role than she had in *True Grit*; her casting is a credit to the film on the side of the unsensational and plausible, but she is given no chance to justify her commitment to the revolution, nor to reveal much of her complex feeling towards Simon.

Here the script is at fault, as it is in other ways. Written by Israel Horowitz from the book by James Kunen, it gives the feeling of an outsider looking in, occasionally with insight (probably, one conjectures, when it follows the book most closely); more often with the preconceptions of an older generation. The comic and half-comic lines, in particular, seem out of touch: the tension building towards the final confrontation, for example, is dissipated with newsmen getting tangled up with their wires and policemen complaining their coffee 'tastes like shit'. The story line is confused so that we are never sure how the students jump from one place to another; more importantly, the crucial theme of Simon's rapid political involvement is never adequately treated, and the whole love affair seems gratuitous. Moreover, the attitude of the film towards the student action is far from being clearly defined: though (perhaps for box-office reasons) the demonstrators are treated sympathetically for the most part, separate scenes take their own emotional direction and there is a bewildering lack of an overall vision.

The uncertainty of the script about its subject is echoed in the direction. *The Strawberry Statement* is a first feature by Stuart Hagmann who, in his twenties, has curiously fared far worse than Antonioni in *Zabriskie Point* in capturing the mood of campus revolt. The shots are ostentatious, breathtaking and often beautiful, with many unusual high and low angles, and much swirling movement and fancy focus-pulling. The mood which such modish filming creates is frequently at odds with the content, and in treating each set-up as raw material for a stunning image, Hagmann and his photographer have devalued

"M\*A\*S\*H": ELLIOTT GOULD, SALLY KELLERMAN, DONALD SUTHERLAND.



the subject matter almost to the point of irrelevance. When the choice of a similar overhead angle in each location makes student radicals debating tactics in the president's office look like oarsmen in a changing room, vital distinctions are being obliterated; what is more, when scenes are viewed as no actual participant could experience them, a sense of involvement is being sacrificed for the sake of an abstract aestheticism. This tendency reaches its worst in the ultra-high-angle shots of the students, crouched in concentric circles, singing: far off in the land of the Busby Berkeley musical, it is a thousand miles from the intimacy and solidarity and terror and paranoia of protesters awaiting the police.

*The Strawberry Statement* has been dismissed by some reviewers as pure exploitation of the swinging revolutionary scene. It is not that, since it is one of the first major films even to approach taking the Movement seriously, but in its indecisiveness, some lapses into commercial cliché, and in the very prettiness of its images it emphasises how far Hollywood still is from a genuine radical cinema.

RUSSELL CAMPBELL

## PATTON: LUST FOR GLORY

WHY PATTON? With Hollywood now firmly entrenched behind the youth barricades, there seems little potential audience response to a blockbuster biography of a World War Two general when most people this side of thirty won't have heard of him, and if they have only because he was the one who slapped a shell-shocked soldier. Obviously aware of this, 20th Century-Fox are boosting Patton as a rebel in the American publicity for the film. Unnecessarily, as it happens. *Patton: Lust for Glory* digs much deeper than that, confounding expectations at every turn.

For one thing, by adroitly side-stepping a discernible point of view *Patton* ensures itself of a reception from all shades of opinion. Patton, as he keeps reminding us, was a man fanatically obsessed by war, a swashbuckling crusader blitzing his way to glory with an unwavering belief in his rightful destiny. If he wants fine weather before a battle, he invokes divine intervention—and gets it. When he's finished mopping up the Hun, he's itching to kick those Russian 'sons-of-bitches' back where they belong. Red-blooded hawks will warm to him, and his words at the beginning about Americans hating to lose will obviously remind them of another war. Doves, on the other hand, will find him the archetypal military maniac, a Genghis Khan of the Western Front (is it mere fancy that here and there, white-faced and Argus-eyed, he fleetingly resembles Karloff's monster?), a narcissistic bully who believes in reincarnation, plans his campaigns with one eye on his previous appearances, and wilfully sacrifices his soldiers in the cause of his own apotheosis. No coincidence, perhaps, that George C. Scott—whose brilliantly sustained, electrifying performance would (will?) doubtless earn the general's approval—also played the crazed General Turgidson in *Dr. Strangelove*. Or you can steer a safe middle course, take the good with the bad, and admit that if the war had to be fought it needed a 'screwball old horse cavalryman' (his own words) like Patton as much as

those cautious, politically sensitive strategists who were out playing golf the day before the Germans launched the Ardennes offensive.

The script (a cunning piece of work by Francis Ford Coppola and Edmund H. North, making judicious use of original material) is prismatic, bristling with ambiguity; but by playing Patton at his own game it allows the man, rather than a mere opinion of him, to make account of himself. Rightly, Patton eclipses the scenery. He is a prima donna and he knows it, haranguing an audience of mesmerised Frenchmen on his personal plans for the liberation of 'the birthplace of Lafayette', leaping gleefully from his truck to play traffic cop for tanks stuck in the mud, ostentatiously parading his mixed feelings of pride and distress as he pins a medal on a badly wounded soldier immediately before the face-slapping incident. And since he is stage manager as well as leading player in this theatrical spectacle, it's in keeping that the supporting players are mere ciphers: Bradley (Karl Malden) a respected but temperamentally ill-matched comrade, Montgomery (wickedly caricatured by Michael Bates) a strutting peacock.

Perhaps the key to the film's tantalisingly ambivalent view of Patton comes at the beginning, when he is asked by the ruler of Morocco what he thinks of the country as he takes the salute at a desert cavalry parade: 'I love it, Excellency. It's a combination of the Bible and Hollywood.' He might be describing himself, as he does later when he tells an aide, having just announced to an incredulous assembly of top brass his intention to relieve Bastogne in two days, that it's only important for him to know whether he's acting or not.

A less obvious but no less effective factor in the film's seemingly non-committal attitude to its subject is Franklin Schaffner's unostentatiously low-key direction. Perhaps unexpectedly, *Patton* is replete with what has emerged as Schaffner's stylistic trademark—figures in a landscape, both natural and man-made. The battles are there, of course, but only as a shadowy backdrop to the man in the spotlight, prefigured in the stunning opening sequence as Patton, imperiously flaunting his medals, riding crop and ivory-handled pistols, pumps morale into his unseen soldiers against a gigantic Stars and Stripes. Appropriately for a man playing God, Patton dwarfs the terrain; there's an extraordinary scene, reminiscent of *The War Lord* in its almost tangible sense of ghostly stillness, when he stands meditatively alone in a desert graveyard, almost supernaturally at one with the infinite landscape of silver-grey sand. Elsewhere, he towers over men and machinery, his apparently superhuman authority caught, for instance, in a low-angle shot through his legs as he defiantly empties his revolver at a pair of German planes which have dared to strafe his desert headquarters.

But there are also times when his star is not in the ascendant, when like the politicians in *The Best Man* and the astronauts in *Planet of the Apes* the man is dwarfed by the setting, as in the bizarre wall-mirrored room in the London hotel where he receives the news of his humiliating decoy role before D-Day. His continually fluctuating fortunes are conveyed visually as much as by his own verbal tirades, nowhere more succinctly perhaps than when, temporarily in eclipse as military governor of Bavaria, he conducts a press conference on a white charger and the camera switches from high to low angle



"THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT"

as he fires off salvos about his plans for the Commies.

Patton (and he wouldn't have minded the comparison) emerges as the Alcibiades of his time, a cultivated thug; and it needed the razor-sharp objectivity of a Thucydides to extract the essence of such a multi-faceted paradox. A few minor flaws apart (an occasional visual cliché, some stiffness in dialogue exchanges), Schaffner has applied himself to this unenviable task with the fine intelligence one has come to expect of him.

DAVID WILSON

## M\*A\*S\*H

PERHAPS IT'S ALL the fault of the U.S. Army and Air Force, who banned *M\*A\*S\*H* (Fox) from their service theatres because it 'reflected unfavourably on the military,' that critical discussion of Robert Altman's hilarious, blasphemous black comedy has mostly centred on whether it is or is not an anti-war film. The question seems to me a monstrous red herring, first because the scriptwriter Ring Lardner Jr. has buried any message he may have had to offer beneath a ton of crude, abrasive, utterly convincing dialogue; secondly, because this empirical method implies an empirical message, and if there's one moral that can safely be drawn from the succession of gags and incidents which provide the film's sprawling narrative structure, it's that inflexible attitudes to war (chauvinistic, religious, bureaucratic or heroic) lead straight to the strait-jacket.

True, *M\*A\*S\*H* (short for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) is set in a war, the Korean war to be precise, and its action takes place in a field hospital on the 38th Parallel. But only two shots are fired in the entire film (both from the referee's starting-gun at an army football game), the enemy are neither seen nor mentioned, and the only direct reference to fighting comes

when a veteran surgeon explains the absence of olives from the martini he offers a new arrival: 'We have to make certain concessions: we're only three miles from the front line.'

But though the front is never seen and its proximity never exploited, the fighting there casts a crimson pall over the entire film: 'the valley of the shadow of death' which the manic major invokes in fervent prayer is a harsh reality. Behind the opening credits, twin helicopters—motionless, blood-drenched bodies strapped to their stretcher platforms—glide slowly over low hills, hovering lazily in the air before descending into the parched plain where the hospital is camped. Not shown again, they in one sense continue to hover, as body after body is conveyed from stretcher to operating table to ambulance or coffin, while beneath faulty lights and in an emergency theatre more crowded than the average maternity ward, the team of surgeons pass their twelve-hour working day poking dispassionately around inside the guts, chests, brains of this endless succession of anonymous casualties, whose spare and sometimes vital parts pile up in refuse pails beside the blood-soaked swabs.

Obviously much of the film's ironic tension derives from the contrast between the life-saving activity of the doctors and the destructive impulse of war. And this idea comes closer than most to being spelled out when two recalcitrant surgeons commandeer a Japanese military hospital to treat a local whore's baby: 'We stumbled on him. We didn't want him, but we couldn't back away from him.' But stronger though less explicit than the contrast between medicine and militarism is that between soldier and civilian. When a lady Major, horrified to find the doctors more interested in screwing than saluting her, remarks of the chief surgeon, 'I wonder how a degenerated person like that could have reached a position of high responsibility in the Army Medical Corps,' the Chaplain tersely answers, 'He was drafted.' And one suspects the real source of official



TETSUE ABE IN "BOY".

displeasure with the film is the way its enlisted characters obdurately persist in behaving like civilians. One Captain confuses lower ranks by habitually dressing as a private in fatigue clothes; a bearded doctor operates in a floral shirt, another in plus-fours and track shoes. No one salutes anyone, doctors and nurses devote all their extra-curricular energy to getting into one another's pants; the lady Major finds the Colonel bedded down with a sexy nurse when she storms in to complain of being exposed to public view in her shower; and everyone from the Colonel down is more interested in being demobilised than actually winning the war.

If the puritan lady and the religious fanatic are victims of vicious practical jokes, they seem to invite these by their own hypocrisy. (Tumbling into bed together with a cry of 'His will be done!' they contrast sadly with the doctor who seduces a willing nurse on the officers' billiard table by mumbling 'Love has nothing to do with this. If my wife were here, I'd be with her.') Sex becomes a bawdy corollary of the fight for survival which the doctors embody. A fight in which moral rigidity and heroic rhetoric have no place, as the Chaplain is twice forced to recognise: when he abandons the last rites to hold a retractor in a tricky operation, or later when he joins in a parody of the Last Supper designed to deter the camp dentist from suicide.

It's not just the rhetoric of Church and Army that receives the considerable weight of the script's satire, but also that of traditional war films. Throughout the proceedings an incompetent Tannoy (the most fully developed machine-character since the 2001 computer) announces such movies as *Halls of Montezuma*, whose inflated publicity blurbs stand in sharp counterpoint to the matter-of-fact realism which even shifts from irony to caricature cannot obscure: the amazing throwaway performances from the trio of surgeons, Yankee (Donald Sutherland), Jew (Elliott Gould) and Southerner (Tom Skerritt);

the muted photography with its preponderant colours of camouflage-green and faded crimson (many of the gaudier scenes are shot through dirty windows) and marked preference for medium shots; the bedlam of the soundtrack, with overlapping dialogue and everybody talking at once.

But beyond analytic observations, M\*A\*S\*H demands to be taken, on its own empirical terms, as probably one of the most irreducibly funny films ever made.

JAN DAWSON

## BOY

NAGISA OSHIMA's sixteenth film displays its credits against the blackened sun of the Japanese flag. The symbol, recurring throughout the film, is intended as an ironic reminder of militant nationalism, the dominant mood (as Oshima sees it) of the society within which his little band of criminals makes its gestures of revolt. In addition, the flag stands for the paternalistic structure of the Japanese way of life, a structure both constricting and emasculatory which has already received a thorough trouncing in two other recent Oshima works, *Death by Hanging* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*. In both these predecessors, youthful offenders against the established order struggle to reconcile their social transgressions with what they are conscious to be their moral ones—only to reach the conclusion that the values of the older generation are neither valid nor relevant to their own problems.

The killer in *Death by Hanging* concludes, with a terrifying logic, that as long as the state finds him guilty he is innocent; and while the guiltlessness of the family in *Boy* (Academy) is never as boldly defined, the individual members are seen to find their own level of crime and punishment quite separate from the conventional requirements of the impersonal cities on whose

roads they occasionally dare to trespass. For them, the flag is neither provider nor protector; rather, they are its victims—and in turn the boy is victim of his parents, whose exploitation of his body as a sacrificial offering to one car accident after another (so that remunerative claims for damages can be made against the drivers) is stoically accepted by him as their right. He even takes pride in his craft, making as it does a vital contribution to the welfare of his group. In such a context, criminality in the legal sense ceases to exist and its place is taken by primitive loyalty to ideals that could only be challenged (in the remote possibility that a challenge would be conceivable) at risk of parental chastisement. In Oshima's view, the Japanese Imperial Household is similarly in a position to transform justice into a matter of personal caprice.

The ten-year-old in *Boy*, based as he is on a real child whose case made Japanese headlines in 1966, could have been given the full sentimental treatment. Like the arrogantly vulnerable miscreants of *Shinjuku Thief*, however, he is contemplated by Oshima with a gaze that is almost cold. All the heart-rending sequences are there that one would expect, but their emotive qualities are carefully muted, in particular by the use of natural sound at times when more popular soundtracks would be a tapestry of strings, but also by the omission of reaction shots and by the selection of distant vantage points for the camera (as when the parents quarrel on the top terrace of a deserted sports-ground but are so far away that it is some time before we can be sure who they are).

Tucked into the core of the film is the delicate story of the boy's private tragedies, the game of hide-and-seek he plays alone (and loses), the grandmother he wanders off to find but never does, the yellow cap he lovingly cleans and dries after one mishap only to see it flung beneath a truck-wheel, the watch his mother buys him which his father hurls into the snow, and, bleakest of all, the disintegration of the comforting fantasy into which he and his tiny brother retreat until the point at which he recognises it no longer holds any security for them.

Again like the preceding films, *Boy* spirals from the apparently rational to the fragmentation of crisis point—in this case the real accident unwittingly caused by the family—after which the central character can at last begin to think clearly, unaffected by the pressures which have previously confused him. Interrogated by the police, the boy answers only with non sequiturs, for the questions he hears are his own. His announcement, with which the film ends, that he was at Hokkaido where the real accident occurred, is the confession emerging from this interior interrogation—a confession the full paradox of which is that it admits guilt for what society has failed to recognise as a crime. And on this, the purest kind of tragedy, the film fades into darkness.

Since the basic narrative of *Boy* is of its own nature multi-faceted, Oshima has confined his style to the most direct observation, with none of the extraordinary theatrical complications of his other works—indeed, the only departures from strict naturalism are the arbitrary sepia passages (which Oshima admits are chiefly designed to enhance the shock effect of the red boot in the snow), and the emphatic slow-motion with which the boy at last destroys his Andromedan snowman. Yet the film has

its undercurrents—the persistent links with rain and snow, the periodic return to the sea, the vital function of meal-times in the development of the family relationships, and of course the regular punctuating scene of a car halting abruptly as a small body bounces from it, an apocalyptic metaphor in which truth and deception are in disturbing contradiction.

Oshima has said that he made the film as a prayer for all human beings who find it necessary to live in this way, and that for him the group in *Boy* have come to represent a holy family. While the divinity of their journey may be open to question, their martyrdom, as befits a prayer, is celebrated with dignity, poetry, and a crystalline precision.

PHILIP STRICK

## THE MOLLY MAGUIRES

IN ITS COOL, painterly look at industrial strife, Widerberg's *Adalen '31* established a style on which Martin Ritt's newest film is an interesting variant. Certainly *The Molly Maguires* (Paramount) owes its chief distinction to some stunning colour photography by James Wong Howe. Working together for the fourth time, Ritt and Wong Howe have transformed the Arthur H. Lewis novel into a film that, like Widerberg's, catches the close-knit rhythm of community life with a painter's eye for the powerful detail, even if there are times when the surface glow of the canvas seems to flatter a rather plain little study in betrayal.

Themes of duplicity are common in Ritt's work. Most recently, *The Brotherhood*, *Hombre* and *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* all pivoted on the activities of double agents, while *The Outrage*, his eccentric Westernisation of *Rashomon*, was similarly double-edged in its study of conflicting versions of a single event. In *The Molly Maguires* the ambiguities are again central. Set in an Appalachian mining village in the 1870s, the story revolves around the activities of a paid informer, McParlan (Richard Harris), who is planted among the members of the industrial resistance group known as the Molly Maguires. With McParlan's own diplomatic enrolment as a Molly, the film virtually resolves itself into a personal confrontation between himself and their dedicated leader Kehoe (Sean Connery). In Ritt's treatment the 'double' theme is paramount, McParlan even boasting a strong physical resemblance to Kehoe—one is reminded of the double captain in Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*—and the final meeting in the death cell, both men's secrets unmasked, suggests an exchange, or merging, of roles that the film's last line pinpoints nicely: 'See you in hell, then.'

At its best the film works on a sustained level of dramatic irony. The setting of McParlan and Mary's brief wooing idyll is suitably equivocal—lake and green forest are the backcloth, but the ground beneath them is slag. The industrial shadow is even here inescapable, and the sheer claustrophobia of the mining village, dominated like any close-bound society by wanton curiosity and suspicion, is made more sombre by the severity of Wong Howe's photography, the spectrum reduced to charcoal blues and blacks and a dull lemon yellow. In some sequences—those in the mine, or the twilight processions of the workers up the main street—the effect is almost monochrome, the emphasis on



RICHARD HARRIS IN "THE MOLLY MAGUIRES".

chiaroscuro: a single light flickering in the foreground as Connery busily sets the fuse in the wordless pre-credits sequence that introduces the resistance in action. Or, more spectacularly, the film's long opening shot, beginning with a slow zoom out from the glowing sunset and ending, after a lengthy pan past the timberwork and towers, almost in the mouth of the pit itself.

The virtuosity is the more impressive in a film whose camera movement is otherwise studiously plain. The few rapid cuts justify themselves dramatically: Harris' head bowing under police chief Frank Finlay's (diplomatic) blow cuts to the same head dipping into a basin of water with Finlay now solicitously in frame. And the vivid cutting of the Gaelic football match—Harris' initiation—conveys the spirit of brute force competitiveness that is the Mollies' dominant ethic.

But simplicity remains the keynote. Both strategically and dramatically, Harris is a shadowily abstract force. 'Where do you come from?'—'Here, there'—'Done much?'—'A little of this, a little of that.' His identity is eroded by the diplomacies of his role; Connery's equally by a single-minded loyalty that becomes a virtual identification with his cause. Their confrontation throughout is thus a strangely impersonal clash of forces—again the echo of Conrad—and Connery's persona as man of action easily condones the ingenuousness which leads to his downfall. In an O'Casey-like scene depicting the lying-in of a dead miner, the camera pans from the motionless body to the teeming activity of the saloon drinkers in the adjoining room, their appetites unimpaired by the solemnity of the occasion. Connery himself emerges suddenly to confront the dead man and inveigh bitterly against his silence. It is a splendidly Irish gesture—the passionately active reviling the, even involuntarily, inert. And the mad conviction—that resistance is possible, obligatory indeed, even in the context of death—brings the scene and Kehoe instantly to life.

Authenticity marks the film throughout. Not merely in the re-creation of locale and period, but in the fact that *The Molly Maguires* has the courage of its conclusion. Kehoe is tricked, arrested and packed off to the death-cell. McParlan, after a flattering interview with his boss, is sent to promotion in Denver. Their fates reversed and sundered totally, only that casual 'See you in hell' pulls them back together, suggesting—along with the film's closing shot of McParlan leaving the prison via the gallows yard—that presently, whether in this world or the next, the same rough justice will overtake them both.

NIGEL ANDREWS

## LE MEPRIS

'DEATH,' says Fritz Lang in *Le Mépris*, 'is not a conclusion.' Not, at least, in the way it was for Michel Poiccard or Nana, for Ulysse and Michelange, even for Bruno Forestier, who was left to learn not to be bitter. Here, for the first time in his work, Godard proceeds beyond the image of the actuality of death—of Camille and Jeremy Prokosch spreadeagled in their car under the monstrous trailer that has crossed their path—to contemplate that eternity of peace and oblivion which was later claimed as their own by the voices of Pierrot and Marianne, united in death and murmuring 'It has been found again...' as the camera gently scanned a glittering, empty sea.

In many ways, and in spite of its fidelity to Moravia's novel, *Le Mépris* (Avco Embassy) might be seen as a trial run for the romantic agony of *Pierrot le Fou*. Where the love of Pierrot for Marianne—one stage further along the road to human shipwreck—started out as 'begotten by Despair/upon Impossibility', the love of Paul for Camille is brought by circumstance to give birth to this same despair and this

same impossibility. For they talk, they discuss, they rationalise their feelings for each other; but reason is the bane of the modern world, what has separated man from nature, and it is no accident that the last sound to be heard in the film is Godard's voice crying 'Silence!'

Essentially, *Le Mépris* is simplicity itself: a moment of doubt born when Prokosch invites Camille to accompany him in his car and Paul says 'Go ahead'. Initially, Camille may have suspected that Paul expected her to be nice to Prokosch in order to consolidate his position with his producer, but her sulkiness is chiefly a reprisal against her husband for taking her fidelity too much for granted. Only when Paul begins to reason, to explore, to justify—in that long, serpentine sequence, occupying nearly a third of the film, which records the death of a love affair as two people dress for dinner—does the *idea* take root and spread like a canker through their lives. Like the man in Camille's story who can't stop thinking of asses once he is told that thinking about an ass will prevent his magic carpet from flying, Paul cannot stop thinking of the probability of Camille's infidelity once he has admitted the possibility by sending her off in Prokosch's car.

The complexity of the film comes from the resonances provided by the film-within-the-film, and also what one might call the film-outside-the-film. Paul, who likes to smoke cigars and wear his hat in the bath because Dean Martin did in *Some Came Running*, has been described by Godard as a 'character from *Marienbad* who tries to play the role of a character from *Rio Bravo*.' The Dean Martin reference, in other words, is not just a throw-away gag, but an attempt to show how Paul assumes the externals of a man of action, but underneath remains the introvert tied up in a web of words and illusions. The man of action, on the analogy with *The Odyssey* which runs through the film, would have left Camille in Rome, gone off to his adventure in Capri—whether to write the script because he was interested

or whether he just wanted the money—and then returned to find his patient Penelope waiting for him.

Similarly, Lang, Bardot and Palance all contribute to this film-outside-the-film, bringing to it the echoes of their ready-made personalities, which are then made to run against the grain of the roles they are required to play. Bardot, for instance, is viewed throughout in her sex kitten persona, and even has her naked back and thighs caressed lovingly by the camera as in the good old Vadim days; yet contrary to appearances and her husband's fears, she incarnates the spirit of marital fidelity as faithfully as Homer's Penelope. Palance, playing the crass Hollywood producer with his own gleefully inimitable panache, yet brings to the part a curious sympathy since his performance is the other side of the coin to his victim of just such a producer in *The Big Knife*. And Lang, in effect playing himself and representing the artist and artistic integrity—with a specific reference to his refusal to play ball with the Nazis in 1933—in fact offers an object lesson in compromise, accepting everything Prokosch decrees with a small, bitter smile. One notices that in the four-way Bressonian play of eyes which dominates the film as Paul stares at his companions in search of illumination, Camille's eyes are downcast, guarding the secret she refuses to reveal; Prokosch's are fixed on the sun in adoration of the gods he identifies with, but also perhaps—why not? after all, the great Hollywood tyrants did produce great films—in quest of some mysterious vision; but Lang's move from person to person, wry, compassionate and uncommitted.

Ultimately, however, Lang wins, since Prokosch's death means that he will be able to finish the film his own way: '*Le Mépris* proves,' as Godard said, 'in 149 shots that in the cinema as in life, there is nothing secret, nothing to elucidate; one has only to live—and make films.' But Lang's role doesn't end there, since he is, *par excellence*, the film-maker of destiny. Not for nothing do the blind, painted statues of Minerva and Neptune detach

themselves from his film-within-the-film to brood ominously over the story of Camille and Paul. 'Gods didn't create man,' says Lang, 'Man created Gods.' In the last scene of the film, as Paul goes up to the roof of the villa to say goodbye, having just learned of Camille's death, Lang is preparing to shoot the scene of Ulysses' first sight of his native land. 'Silence!' cries Godard as Lang's assistant; 'Silenzio!' echoes the Italian interpreter; and as Ulysses stands facing out to sea, arms outstretched and edging sideways to keep pace with Lang's tracking camera, our camera follows, outstripping it to gaze calmly out on the blue, empty horizon.

Forgotten is the entire catastrophe Paul foresaw in the breakdown of his marriage, forgotten the tragedy of Camille's death, in this first glimpse of man's native land where eternity is found again. Like Hölderlin, whose enigmatic poem Lang quotes in its two different versions, Godard does not finally say whether it is the presence or the absence of God in this eternity that reassures man. But then, to him, God is a camera. Or used to be.

TOM MILNE

## HETTY KING—PERFORMER

DAVID ROBINSON's great strength as a critic has always been his infectious generosity, his ability to perceive and communicate the positive qualities of a particular star, film or director while maintaining an intelligent critical perspective. This same quality—a generous, undisguised enthusiasm for his subject and an equally generous self-effacement—permeates his first film as a director.

*Hetty King—Performer* is a lovingly made thirty-minute documentary about the Music Hall star (a spritely eighty-six at the time of shooting) who began her stage career in 1888 at the age of five and who this year achieves what is possibly a world record by appearing on the stage for the tenth consecutive decade.

The early days of Hetty King's career are evoked in the atmospheric montage which opens the film: footage from an 1896 Lumière film showing hansom cabs jostling past the Leicester Square Empire (then a music hall), with Hetty King's voice rising on the soundtrack with a chorus of 'Piccadilly', a song she has never dropped from her repertoire; old theatre posters and programmes and photographs of the great Music Hall stars, with a brief historical commentary spoken by Lindsay Anderson. But Hetty King's international success came as a result of a decision she made, when already a veteran singer and sand-dancer in 1905, to change her act to male impersonations; and this change is illustrated by fragmentary footage showing her as a navy, an empire builder, a man-about-town, a cowboy; smoking a pipe with some construction workers as she absorbs their mannerisms, dressed in Army uniform to give a send-off to the troops in World War I.

This historical précis serves as a kind of theoretical prologue to the subject of the film, an irrepressibly vital and professional artist. The second section is the most personal: relaxed and fragile-looking, seated beside her sister Olive (her dresser for over forty years), Hetty reminisces to the camera about her early career, her first

"HETTY KING—PERFORMER"



evening-dress suit that she persuaded a tailor to make for £5, the difficulty she's always had in slicking back her hair. She talks intimately, but her conversation is absolutely single-minded, revealing a total dedication to her act. She is always the first to arrive at the theatre, the last to leave it, and believes in spending four hours in her dressing-room before the first house.

So after a brief shot of the two old ladies walking arm-in-arm down the Eastbourne street to the Royal Hippodrome (where she was giving nine performances a week at the time), the camera observes her in her dressing-room. Now she no longer talks to it: she talks to herself as she meticulously organises her make-up and troublesome hair, occasionally speaks to Olive to check that her props are perfectly clean

and on hand. She applies scotch tape to the end of a cigar to prevent herself from chewing it; lovingly, with almost religious solemnity, polishes her immaculate top hat with a velvet cloth. Half self-absorbed, half absorbed in her other persona, the gentleman whose face she slowly creates in the mirror.

She walks backstage, passed by bustling chorus girls she doesn't appear to see, waits in the wings for her cue, walks down to the footlights and is suddenly transformed, no longer a frail little old lady but a suave man-about-town, a drunken bachelor, a salty old sailor. She has lost the looks, the figure, the vocal range that distinguished her in her youth; she has even lost her breath ('I'm a bit puffed,' she quips between numbers. 'I must be getting

old.'). Yet the effect is still superb: a magical performance captured simply and unpretentiously on film, with none of the fancy Hollywood production-number tricks used to connote star quality, without a single reaction shot of the roaringly appreciative audience to whom Hetty King now totally belongs.

'In the daytime/Grandad's searching for truth/But in the night-time/He's searching for his youth,' she sings in 'Piccadilly'. Hetty King finds her youth again every evening; and in showing her nightly transformation from old lady to ageless star David Robinson also reveals how much this discovery owes to her professional inventiveness.

JAN DAWSON

## BOOK REVIEWS

**THE INTERNATIONAL FILM INDUSTRY: WESTERN EUROPE AND AMERICA SINCE 1945**, by Thomas H. Guback. (Indiana University Press, \$10.)

EVER SINCE THE INVASION of British screens by First National in the years immediately following the Great European War, the film industries (and governments) of Europe have been conscious of the need for self-defence against Hollywood. Against the looting of their personnel, they could do nothing; but the incursion of films was met by screen quotas, import quotas, dubbing licences, tit-for-tat arrangements—with varying success. After the Second World War the emphasis gradually changed from the saturation of European cinemas with American films (especially, on the Continent, the four or five year backlog of unscreened Hollywood wartime production) to the infiltration of American capital into the native film industries.

Two factors played a major part in this development: (a) the currency shortages after the war, and so the need to reduce dollar loss by restricting the outflow of box-office takings across the Atlantic—which led to the U.S. film companies having large sums of unconvertible foreign currency on their hands, part of which could be invested in the local film industries (production or distribution). And (b) the emergence of national schemes for financial aid to the local film industries, which made it economically worthwhile for U.S. companies to form foreign subsidiaries which were capable of qualifying for such aid. The latter is a perfect example of the process described by Servan-Schreiber in *Le Défi Américain*.

Mr. Guback in his book (the title of which is quite misleading without its subtitle) traces this development with an easy authority. It is an account for which we have long been waiting, and the author's mastery of the situation and statistics in the major European film countries, especially Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, ensures that the picture he gives is a thorough one with no significant gaps to leave the reader with an uneasy feeling that it might be unreliable. The story is told clearly and the thematic pattern is well shown. One enormous advantage of the comparative technique used by the author is that one can for the first time see how the economic preoccupations of one country are matched by those of the others. A genuine European pattern begins to emerge (just as in Servan-Schreiber's book), but informed throughout by a clear understanding of the motives, strategy, and tactics of the American companies themselves. The author is, in fact, neatly straddling the Atlantic, and it is difficult to say precisely from which shore he is viewing the battle.

The account of the interaction of American and European film

industries provides an indispensable and inevitable background to any consideration of the film policies of the EEC, which is covered in this book, but only in so far as it impinges upon the author's theme. As regards the EEC's protectionist elements, Mr. Guback points out (as did Servan-Schreiber in the wider economic context) that U.S. industry evades the controls by carrying on operations from within the Community itself. This is related to the two key areas of European and EEC domestic concern: subsidies to film-makers, and co-productions, each of which receives a separate chapter. Many stimulating ideas are thrown out relating to the EEC; and the author ends by persuasively arguing that the network of bilateral co-production treaties has now reached such complexity that the time is ripe for an international convention on the subject, perhaps starting with an EEC convention.

The book is full of similar ideas and illuminations. It shows why Germany has always been the odd man out in EEC film policy (until very recently), as a result of the pressure brought to bear upon the German film industry by the MPEA and U.S. State Department after the war. The value to the American film industry of the Webb-Pomerene Act, which permits export cartels despite the stringent U.S. anti-trust laws, is pointed out. The book is particularly good on the National Film Finance Corporation. It describes usefully the various boycotts organised by the American film industry of several European countries. The author makes the perceptive observation concerning the alleged stifling effect of subsidies that 'the most progressive, avant-garde and original artistic work in the post-war cinema has come, not from subsidy-free Hollywood, but from the subsidised industries of France, Italy, Britain and Sweden.' He makes one howler in using the title *Bicycle Thief* for De Sica's film, and even puts a *sic* after the use of the correct plural title in a quotation (p. 178). And his statement on p. 106 that the Second World War 'in destroying the German war machine, also largely destroyed the film industry which had helped to support it' should be read in the light of David Stewart Hull's new and invaluable book on *Film in the Third Reich*, in the epilogue to which it is made clear that the German film industry was effectively destroyed by the victorious allies after the end of the war.

NEVILLE HUNNINGS

**THE STUDIO**, by John Gregory Dunne. (W. H. Allen, 36s.)

IN THIS ACCOUNT of daily life from boardroom to wardrobe at Fox in 1967 the author records an intriguing conversation between David Brown, the Studio's Vice-President in charge of 'story operations', and George Axelrod, who was trying to convince him that his script, *The Secret Life of an American Wife*, then called *The Connecticut Look*, was a good one and the picture worth making. He was also trying to convince him that although it involved a sympathetically viewed adultery it wasn't a dirty picture. It was because of this risqué element that the assigned producer, Frank McCarthy, wasn't anxious to be associated with the picture. Axelrod wasn't anxious to have him. The scene goes as follows:

'Axelrod changed his tack. "You know, the late Judy Holliday had the kind of *purity* the girl in this part needs."

"She would have been wonderful," Brown said. He had not shifted position in his chair.

"And I think the scene with the girl and the movie star in the bedroom is the best thing I've ever written," Axelrod said.

"He comes off very sympathetic in the end," Brown said.

"That's right," Axelrod said.

"And he started off as such a shit," Brown said.

"That's the beauty of the scene," Axelrod said.\*

Dunne records that McCarthy didn't produce the picture in the end, Axelrod did. What he couldn't record is that it was a witty and intelligent film and that Fox continued to treat both it and Axelrod as though they had leprosy, up to and after the moment of release. Trying to interview Axelrod, I tracked him down in Switzerland the day before the London release. I found to my embarrassment that it was the first he had heard of it. The studio hadn't bothered to let him know. I had to describe, over the telephone—Axelrod didn't know me from Adam—the size and standing of the Rialto Cinema (neither of them considerable), the nature of the publicity it was being given, and what I thought future plans for the picture's release were. I gave him all the information I could, which wasn't much since Fox's office in London hadn't been exactly encouraging. Axelrod swore down the 'phone and then apologised. I understood his feelings, I said. The picture ran for a few weeks at the Rialto and then went out as a second feature with a Sinatra vehicle. Axelrod said, 'You give them a year and a half of your life . . .'

*The Studio* is full—indeed, is composed—of such stories, and no doubt anyone connected with the business can add his own postscripts. This record finishes with the première of *Dr. Dolittle* on which 18 million dollars of the Studio's money was resting. It is with some breathlessness that we too await the audience reaction at the first sneak preview. It was a flop. The picture has since lost heavily.

Dunne has a sharp ear and a witty pen and his dry account is desperately convincing. What he shows most clearly is that making pictures is about money: finding money, paying money, paying for money, getting money back, making money; and that the last thing the Studio looked for from the people making the pictures—the Axelrods, the Fleischers, the Schaffners and their teams—is 'quality'. In the words of the young agent Dunne meets: 'You fail upward here. A guy makes a ten-million-dollar bomb, the big thing is not that he's made a bomb, but that he put together a ten-million-dollar picture. Next time out they give him a twelve-million-dollar picture . . . You make a picture for seven-fifty, it's a nice picture, it makes a little money, but you're dead. They aren't interested in pictures that make a little money. Everybody's looking for the killing. So you bomb out at ten million. Well, you put together a big one, and the next time out, you might hit with one.'

GAVIN MILLAR

## COCA COLA AND THE GOLDEN PAVILION

*continued from page 156*

youth led Kurosawa to reminisce on his own early days. 'I was influenced by Ozu's silent films, Ito and all Mizoguchi. One of my greatest friends in the 1930s was Sadao Yamanaka\* who died while he was in the Army in 1938. I well remember the night he was drafted—he was very shocked and began to count his age on his fingers. I had a strange premonition that he would be killed.'

Turning to his own films, Kurosawa agreed that the European habit of categorising them as 'serious' and 'light' was a valid one. 'In any case, doing a film like *Living* is such an exhausting experience that I have to make an entertainment (in the Graham Greene sense) in order to recover.' He much regretted that English audiences had not seen the full version of *The Seven Samurai*. 'The company forced me to cut it for abroad—I did it under protest and the first half, in particular, was seriously harmed.' Coming back to the present world scene, he felt 'it was a budding period for all kinds of things' counting Pasolini (once again!), *Easy Rider* and *Midnight Cowboy* among his favourites. Not surprisingly he felt there was little future in co-productions, but his final comment was unexpected: 'I think the best Japanese pictures are better understood by Europeans than by Japanese. Kabuki and Noh are difficult for foreigners, but all films—whether with ancient or modern subjects—are seen through the eyes of the director and if he's good he will be understood. So why not in Europe? National cultures may be different but (and here Kurosawa made a smiling gesture to our hard-working interpreter), we can communicate, can't we?'

\* I saw one of Yamanaka's most famous films, *Humanity and Paper Balloons* (1937), which has some thematic affinities with *The Lower Depths*. Considering its production date, it is also remarkable for its radical, anti-authoritarian tone.

# CORRESPONDENCE

Cuba

*The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND*

SIR,—I have read the answer of Mr. Andi Engel to my letter published in the Spring issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*.

I am afraid that Mr. Engel will have to do more serious research for his forthcoming book about Cuban cinema. I would advise him to have the curiosity of the late Georges Sadoul, who, for about two weeks in his stay in Havana in 1961, had continuous screenings of pre-Castro films. If Mr. Engel is a cinephile and not only a politician he might have some agreeable surprises. When Mr. Engel goes back to Havana he should interview not only the bureaucrats of ICAIC that often distort Cuban film history to their advantage, but also the old film workers and technicians that know firsthand how things were before and after. They would not deny that the State film monopoly ICAIC was able to use from almost its inception—after nationalising the existing private film companies—various and excellent equipment. As a matter of fact, I used myself in 1960, in a musical film I made for ICAIC (*Ritmo de Cuba*) a very perfect 'pre-revolutionary' playback system, blimped Arriflex camera with Cook lenses and even a very spectacular crane dolly which belonged formerly to the film company of Manolo Alonso (I have pictures of the shooting of the film). It was impossible as late as 1960 to 'take to the States' this huge dolly and 'all worthwhile equipment' without the agreement of the revolutionary government.

I would also suggest to Mr. Engel to learn Spanish if he wants to use properly the books on the subject published in Cuba. I recommend *Ojeada al Cine Cubano: 1906-1958* by J. M. Valdes-Rodriguez, published by Comision de Extension Universitaria in Havana, 1963. And, of course, the book by Arturo Agramonte already mentioned in my other letter and misquoted this time by Mr. Engel. ('No film by Quesada now exists, Almendros has not seen a film of his . . . because not even Agramonte has.') On page 30 of this book Mr. Engel will find the data about *Parque del Palatino* (1906) by the pioneer Diaz Quesada. Agramonte certifies that a print of this film does exist. As a matter of fact many people have seen it at the screenings of the Department of Cinematography of the University of Havana. Foreigners like Sadoul did also see it and even wrote about it in eulogistic terms. I myself have seen *Parque del Palatino* twice, and find it extraordinary for its time. . .

It is true that neither Fañdino, Manet or Canel, Suárez, Menéndez, Lucci and even myself can be considered 'technically' as exiles since those western European countries where we live, including fascist Spain, keep excellent diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba. But isn't it significant that so many of us—and the list is not complete—have chosen to work here instead of Cuba, where the conditions are supposed to be ideal for the artist? The truth is that all of us—and that would be a long, long story—have had troubles with ICAIC bureaucrats: censorship, scripts and ideas rejected, completed films banned. That some are not willing to talk, to write and take a risk (I have kept silent for seven years!), this can be called simply political blackmail. . .

A general remark to Mr. Engel: not 300,000 but half a million Cubans of all conditions have already left the island. An estimated 700,000 have applied to leave (K. S. Karol, *Les Guerrilleros au Pouvoir*, published in Paris by Robert Laffont, 1970, page 442); a great percentage of discontent for a country of about seven million, isn't it? Yes, in theory everybody can leave, but they must be over 27 and only after at least two years of hard labour in the sugar fields. Such is the case now of many artists and moviemakers having applied for their exit from Cuba and living under fear in this pro-Soviet Union, reactionary, neo-Stalinistic, unfortunate tropical island.

Yours faithfully,  
NESTOR ALMENDROS

Paris.

## Potemkin in Print

SIR,—The other day I came across a booklet entitled *The Battleship Potemkin* published by Lorrimer Publishing Limited and dated 1968. I must apologise for not having seen it earlier.

I wish to say right away that the booklet seems to me an excellent piece of work, well and conscientiously produced, and that if the publishers are issuing other books of the same kind to the same standard they are doing a work of service to all students of the art and history of the cinema.

But why has it been thought necessary to describe what is printed in the booklet as the 'screenplay'? It is not.

Surely the term 'screenplay' is generally, and—to avoid confusion—should (like 'scenario') be always reserved for what is written in the preliminary stage of the creation of a film, *before* the shooting, a stage influencing all subsequent stages. Am I not correct in thinking that, in British and American practice, the term 'screenplay' on the credits of a film always has this significance? And it is the creative work of screenwriters, usually including or in co-operation with the director.

What has been printed in this Lorrimer booklet is not such a screenplay, not indeed a part of the creative process at all, but a careful transcription *subsequent* to completion of the film, made at the workbench by examination of one copy or collation of several.

The distinction is the more important in the case of this particular film because, quite certainly, there was no author's scenario closely corresponding to the finished film. It is well known that the film was originally planned as only an episode in a much larger conception, not written by Eisenstein, and that very much was modified during the shooting in the light of the conditions obtaining.

A bibliographical note appearing in the Lorrimer booklet states that the text there used is from the 'original Russian-language edition' published in 'a book of scenarios in Russia, 1926.'

I venture to find this statement astonishing. No such book is known to me. I can find no mention of it in the bibliography of Eisenstein's writings printed in the Soviet edition of his *Collected Works*.

A German transcript of *Potemkin* was issued by Henschel Verlag, Berlin, GDR, in 1961. The preface to this publication states that its text has been based on a typewritten transcript made by I. V. Sokolov in 1934\*, and that in preparing the former the latter has been collated by the German editor both with copies of the original silent film (1925) and copies of the 1930 sound-film reissue available in the Berlin archive.

Comparison of the Lorrimer text with the Henschel Verlag text shows a substantial identity, even to words and phrases. Can we credit that there could be such an identity between the 'source' of the former, an alleged 'scenario', and the source of the latter, an acknowledged transcript, published eight years later? Furthermore, the original silent film—as I can testify—as late as 1929 included as prefatory title a quotation from Trotsky. The Lorrimer text, described as translated from something published in 1926, substitutes a quotation from Lenin, although at the date claimed there could have been no reason to make the substitution.

All this is liable to confuse researchers. May I, through your columns, make an appeal to Lorrimer Publishing Limited to make crystal clear the nature of what it is publishing? Best of all would be to do this conspicuously in the class title of the series, but if for some reason it is too late to do this, at least let us have for each booklet a full and accurate scholarly note, exactly identifying the source where the text derives from translation, identifying the scholar and the copy or copies used where the transcript from film is made afresh for the edition.

In that way they will immensely enhance the value of their series and the debt all students owe them.

Yours faithfully,

Garston, Herts.

IVOR MONTAGU

#### Appointment in Belgium

SIR,—Several times lately contributors to your magazine have complained that American films are shown in Europe in a mutilated form. This has been the case for Huston's *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, Polanski's *Dance of the Vampires*, Lumet's *The Appointment* and Hitchcock's *Topaz*. May I draw your attention to the fact that in Belgium all these films have been shown in their original and complete versions, and that consequently the complaints formulated by your contributors only relate to the versions shown in Britain.

Indeed, the Belgian public has been able to see the version in washed colours of *Reflections*, the uncut version of *The Fearless Vampire Killer* (the original title of Polanski's film), the uncut version (with both suicide attempts left in) of *The Appointment*, and the version of *Topaz* ending with Piccoli's suicide.

I especially want to stress the case of *The Appointment*, which the Belgian public saw immediately after the Cannes Festival and exactly as it was shown there, because both Mr. Farber and Mr. Lumet seem to believe the contrary (according to Mr. Farber's letter in your Winter issue).

May I finally invite all British admirers of American films to cross the channel once in a while and see the films they like in their complete and original version over here in Belgium?

Yours faithfully,

Mol, Belgium.

RONNY VOS

\*Note: This bears no resemblance at all to a rough summary by Eisenstein himself first published posthumously in 1956.



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entirely of dwarfs who act out an obscene parody of human life. The inmates of a house of correction have staged a revolt against the school: this is the initial situation, and from what follows political parallels can of course be drawn, although the film seemed to me more metaphysical than political. In the obscene cavortings of these twenty-seven dwarfs, one is horrified not by their differences from us but by their similarities. For once, a literal microcosm: all of human life is there, writ small. Very German, said some; yes indeed, but like Bosch and Grunewald it bears witness to a view of human life that we ignore at our peril.

Lastly, two very important films, one from the Directors' Fortnight (*The Inheritors*) and the other from the main event (*Harry Munter*), neither of which received as much attention as they deserved. Carlos Diegues' *The Inheritors* is a survey of Brazilian life over the last four decades as seen through the destiny of a single family. Diegues has taken as his point of departure that terrible tradition of melodramatic acting which plagues Brazilian cinema and has used it as a metaphor for what is wrong with his country's political life. The past forty years of Brazilian life, he seems to be saying, is a bad melodrama; and he has encouraged his actors to exaggerate their artificiality, making entrances and exits as if they were on stage, playing up the terrifying series of betrayals and dispiriting succession of compromises that make up his story. Visually, the film is inventive too: almost systematically, each reverse angle is never what we think it's going to be, and this constant shifting of angle, this spatial ambiguity is not unrelated to the theme of the film, and plays beautifully against the theatrical tableaux. By going along with Brazilian hysteria, and by understanding it, Diegues makes something out of it, which is more than can be said for some of his compatriots.

Kjell Grede's *Harry Munter* was not a great success at Cannes: even those who liked his first film *Hugo and Josefin* found the new one heavy, metaphysical—in a word, Swedish. Well, I suppose it is, but I think it's very good. The subject is difficult: a boy of eighteen who is engaged on nothing less than a kind of imitation of Christ. How can I, he says, pretend to care about the starving in India or Burma if I don't look after the people in trouble in my own backyard? So he adopts a sick old workman, he helps his grandmother to die, he befriends a young girl whom he thinks to be paranoid. But then he comes up against the realities of evil, of death: the girl's imaginary tormentor turns out to be very real, and the old workman still has to face death alone. Such subject matter is indeed hard to bring off, but Grede succeeds because of his sincerity and his simplicity. He is honest enough not to hide the less admirable side of Harry's spiritual quest, and the directness of his approach permits him, as in *Hugo and Josefin*, to avoid the pitfalls of sentimentality.

RICHARD ROUD

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

NIGEL ANDREWS came down from Cambridge last year. He is about to take up postgraduate work at London University, doing research on the plays of Eugene O'Neill . . . RUSSELL CAMPBELL is a New Zealander, editor of a forthcoming series of textbooks on professional film technique for the Tantivy Press . . . PETER COWIE is the editor of International Film Guide and its associated series of paperbacks. He has just published a two-volume survey of the Swedish cinema . . . FOLKE ISAKSSON lives in Stockholm, and is a poet, critic and reporter. His book on India, with photographs by Stig T. Karlsson, was published last year; a study on *Politics and Film*, written with Leif Furhammar, will be published here later this year by November Books . . . JULIAN JEBB taught in Germany and Rome after graduating from Cambridge. Has worked for the last five years for BBC Television Arts Features, and recently directed the Omnibus film on Virginia Woolf, *A Night's Darkness, A Day's Sail*. He is also a regular broadcaster, and book reviewer for *The Financial Times*, *The Times* and *Sunday Times* . . . JOHN FRANCIS LANE is an English journalist who lives in Rome. Frequent contributor to *The Times*, etc.; and has played occasional small parts in Italian films (*L'Ape Regina*, *La Dolce Vita*) . . . GEOFFREY MINISH is a Canadian journalist working in Paris, and correspondent there for the Canadian film magazine *Take One* . . . DAVID PIRIE is a postgraduate student researching at London University on Edgar Allan Poe. The writer of a university thesis on Bob Dylan, and frequent contributor to the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, etc., he is at present working on a book on the aesthetics of the horror film . . . ROBERT VAS, 39 years old and of Hungarian origin, has lived in England since 1956. A writer/director of documentaries for BBC TV, he has recently made film portraits of Miklós Jancsó and Alexander Korda; his latest, on Humphrey Jennings, will be shown in September . . . COLIN J. WESTERBECK, JR. writes a film column for the *Manhattan Tribune*, teaches English at the City College of New York, and is also writing a Ph.D. dissertation in English literature at Columbia University.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

A-Z OF MOVIE MAKING. By Wolf Rilla. (Studio Vista, 45s.)  
EASTERN EUROPE, AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE. By Nina Hibbin. (Zwemmer, 18s.)  
LITERATURE AND FILM. By Robert Richardson. (Indiana University Press, \$4.95.)  
REFLECTIONS ON THE SCREEN. By George W. Linden. (Wadsworth, California.)  
THE RULES OF THE GAME. By Jean Renoir. (Classic Film Scripts, Lorrimer Publishing, 15s.)  
SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA. By John Baxter. (Zwemmer, 15s.)  
THE YOUNGEST SON. By Ivor Montagu. (Lawrence and Wishart, 63s.)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WARNER-PATHE for *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, *Woodstock*, *THX 1138*.  
UNITED ARTISTS for *Kes*, *Bloody Sunday*, *Leo the Last*.  
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *The Molly Maguires*.  
M-G-M for *Zabriskie Point*, *The Strawberry Statement*.  
20th CENTURY-FOX for *M\*A\*S\*H*.  
BRITISH LION/MAYA FILM PRODUCTIONS for *Bronco Bullfrog*.  
COLUMBIA PICTURES/DINO DE LAURENTIIS/MOSFILM for *Waterloo*.  
ACADEMY for *Boy*, *Un Certo Giorno*.  
ACADEMY/CONNOISSEUR for *The Confrontation*.  
UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *They Might Be Giants*.  
SANDREWS for *Harry Munter*.  
UNIFRANCE FILM for *Le Boucher*.  
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EURO INTERNATIONAL FILMS for *The Cannibals*.  
ALTA-LIGHT PRODUCTIONS for *The Last Movie*.  
MONDAY FILM CORPORATION for *In the Year of the Pig*.  
TOHO PRODUCTIONS for *The Scandalous Adventures of Buraikan*, *The Earnest Fight with Swords*.  
KUROSAWA PRODUCTIONS for *The Sound of a Streetcar*.  
FUJI PAVILION, EXPO 70 for 210 mm. frame.  
RAI-RADIOTELEVISIONE ITALIANA for *I Recuperanti*.  
DAVID ROBINSON for *Hetty King—Performer*.  
STEPHEN DWOSKIN for *Chinese Checkers*, *Take Me*.  
TONY RAYNS for *Hellhound on My Trail*.  
ANTHONY FOUTZ/DOUGLAS TRUMBULL for *Saturation 70*.  
NEMAI GHOSH for *Siddhartha and the City*.  
STIG T. KARLSSON for photographs of Satyajit Ray.  
COLIN J. WESTERBECK Jr. for photographs of Emile de Antonio.

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SOLE AGENTS for U.S.A.: Eastern News Distributors, 155 West 15th Street, New York 10011.  
PRINTED BY The Whitefriars Press Ltd., London and Tonbridge, England.  
BLOCKS by Art Reproduction Co. Ltd., London.  
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES (4 issues) 24s. including postage.  
U.S.A.: \$4. Price per copy in United States, \$1.  
PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July, and 1st October.  
Overseas Editions: 12th of these months.

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# FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

**ADVENTURERS, THE** (Paramount) Harold Robbins best-seller, alternating South American rapes and revolts with another flaccid instalment of international jet set doings. A slow ride on the galloping tosh horse. (Bekim Fehmiu, Alan Badel, Candice Bergen; director, Lewis Gilbert. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**AIRPORT** (Rank) A wild night at the international airport, with the runways snowed up, a mad bomber loose on the Rome flight, and a little old lady stowaway dodging the security checks. Massively old-fashioned all-star movie, one problem and big scene per star. (Burt Lancaster, Dean Martin, Jean Seberg; director, George Seaton. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

**BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES** (Fox) Domsday sequel to the Schaffner original, introducing a mutant tribe living in the wreckage of the New York underground and worshipping the Bomb and the Holy Fall-Out. Paul Dehn's script somewhat heavy on significance, though the sets still look good. (James Franciscus, Charlton Heston, Maurice Evans; director, Ted Post. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

**BOB & CAROL & TED & ALICE** (Columbia) Amiable, slightly erratic satire about the impact of the principle of free love on two ageing bourgeois-hippy couples—managing to stop just short of advocating spouse-swapping as fun. Script witty, performances excellent. (Natalie Wood, Robert Culp, Elliott Gould, Dyan Cannon; director, Paul Mazursky. Technicolor.)

**BOY, THE** (Academy) Oshima's black-humoured, touching and utterly unsentimental study of a child trained by his family to sustain fake injuries in traffic accidents. Impeccably photographed, credibly developed and scarcely needing the added frisson it gains from being based on real events. (Fumio Watanabe, Akiko Koyama, Tetsuo Abe. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

**CACTUS FLOWER, THE** (Columbia) The trials of a New York dentist who pretends, for reasons so devious that only a Broadway comedy could entertain them, to be married to his starchy receptionist. Nicely acted light-weight, though something less than hilarious. (Walter Matthau, Ingrid Bergman, Goldie Hawn; director, Gene Saks. Technicolor.)

**CONFRONTATION, THE** (Academy/Connoisseur) Jancsó's film about exuberant young leftist students of 1947 confronting the boys of a church school. A mobile and extraordinary film, dialectic choreographed to a revolutionary song rhythm, and a continuation of Jancsó's endless inquiry into the mechanics of power. (Andrea Drahota, András Bálint, András Kozák. Eastman Colour, Agascope.) Reviewed.

**CONTEMPT** (Avco-Embassy) Godard's *Le Mépris*, seven years late in reaching British cinemas, but with the old-style Godard still looking so much better than the new that Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution have a lot to answer for. (Brigitte Bardot, Michel Piccoli, Jack Palance. Technicolor, Franscope.) Reviewed.

**DUNWICH HORROR, THE** (Warner-Pathé) Striking adaptation of the Lovecraft story, about a strange young man (Dean Stockwell) who prepares a human sacrifice (Sandra Dee) in order to bring the Ancient Powers back to Earth to reunite him with his twin monster-brother. A bit psychedelic in places, but with a real feeling for sinister rites and strange manifestations. (Ed Begley; director, Daniel Haller. Eastman Colour.)

**EXTRAORDINARY SEAMAN, THE** (M-G-M) John Frankenheimer's bizarre comic-strip fantasy, spliced with spoof newsreels, about four American sailors and their encounter with the ghost of a disgraced Royal Navy captain. A few nice ideas, but whimsical satire is not Frankenheimer territory and it shows. (David Niven, Faye Dunaway, Alan Alda. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

**GAY DECEIVERS, THE** (Grand National) Tasteless queer-baiting draft-resistance comedy, the more offensive for its thin veneer of enlightened liberalism. Michael Greer is amusing as a nervous drag queen, but not enough to compensate for the acute embarrassment of cast and audience alike. (Kevin Coughlin, Larry Casey; director, Bruce Kessler. Eastman Colour.)

**HOOK, LINE AND SINKER** (Columbia) Jerry Lewis sinks to the bottom in a desperate comedy about a fishing addict who takes a last trip round the world in the (misguided) belief that his days are numbered. Visual gags swamped by sloppy direction; verbal wit never surfaces. Why doesn't he go back to directing himself? (Peter Lawford, Anne Francis; director, George Marshall. Technicolor.)

**IN SEARCH OF GREGORY** (Rank) Hopeful exploration of the relationship between reality and fantasy, with Julie Christie hunting obsessively for a man she never sees but falls in love with. Some nice characterisations, but the puzzle element is puerile. (Michael Sarrazin, John Hurt; director, Peter Wood. Technicolor.)

**JULIUS CAESAR** (Commonwealth United) Stuart Burge's ugly, ill-spoken, ham-fisted successor to his earlier *Othello*. John Gielgud's mellifluous melancholy Caesar comes off best; he doesn't have to hang around for the second half. (Jason Robards, Charlton Heston, Jill Bennett, Robert Vaughn. Technicolor.)

**KES** (United Artists) Sub-delinquent schoolboy temporarily redeemed by discovery and training of kestrel hawk. Realistic Northern dialogue, backgrounds and performances. Younger actors particularly good. (David Bradley, Colin Welland; director, Kenneth Loach. Technicolor.)

**KREMLIN LETTER, THE** (Fox) Probably the most involved spy story to date and, on the whole, one of the dullest. John Huston's direction just fails to keep the suspense boiling, though there are compensations in Richard Boone's portrait of a ruthless, devious agent and one or two flashes of crisp action. (Max von Sydow, Patrick O'Neal, Bibi Andersson, Orson Welles. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

**LEO THE LAST** (United Artists) John Boorman returns to London with a wholly original yarn about the impressionable aristocrat being converted to the brawling simplicity of his subjects' street-life. A curious air of disorientation is created by lingering American influences, but the film has undeniable visual flair, Zolaesque exuberance, and a nice if erratic sense of comedy. (Marcello Mastroianni, Billie Whitelaw, Calvin Lockhart, Glenna Forster Jones. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

**LET IT BE** (United Artists) Straight documentary showing the Beatles informally rehearsing some old songs and some new, then disrupting traffic with an equally informal recording session on the Apple roof. Rather sycophantically directed, but fascinating for its revelation of personal discords amidst the harmonies. And the songs are smashing. (Director, Michael Lindsay-Hogg. Technicolor.)

**M\*A\*S\*H** (Fox) You can argue till you're blue in the face as to whether M\*A\*S\*H is hip anti-establishment or just *Carry On Doctor* with blood; the important thing is that its two-fingered gesture at good taste and convention is very funny indeed. (Donald Sutherland, Elliott Gould; director, Robert Altman. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.) Reviewed.

**MOLLY MAGUIRES, THE** (Paramount) Despite impeccable photography by James Wong Howe, authentic locations, meticulous sets and strong performances across the board, Martin Ritt's dramatised history of the miners' struggle for improved conditions and recourse to violence in nineteenth-century Pennsylvania remains chillingly impersonal. (Richard Harris, Sean Connery, Samantha Eggart. Technicolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.

**MONTEREY POP** (Fair Enterprises) Straight-forward *cinéma-vérité* condensation of the 1967 Pop Festival at Monterey, California. Highlights include an electric number from Janis Joplin and what Ravi Shankar considers his greatest raga performance. The Who and Jimi Hendrix smash up their instruments, while the Mamas and the Papas advocate gentle love and peace. (Otis Redding, Jefferson Airplane; director, D. A. Pennebaker. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

**NED KELLY** (United Artists) Rather lame but not unsympathetic attempt to document the famous Australian outlaw as a full-blooded revolutionary. Short on action, and although the Australian locations are good the colour-matching is lousy. (Mick Jagger; director, Tony Richardson. Technicolor.)

**ONE GAME IN TOWN, THE** (Fox) Las Vegas love affair, with chorus girl Elizabeth Taylor trying to keep nightclub pianist Warren Beatty away from the gaming tables. Ponderous but rather likeable direction by George Stevens

takes one back quite a few years. (Charles Braswell. DeLuxe Colour.)

**PATTON: LUST FOR GLORY** (Fox) Provocative, intriguingly ambivalent account of the bamboozling, blood and guts general who might have shortened the war if he hadn't slapped a soldier's face. George C. Scott lives the man, finely abetted by a cunning script and Franklin Schaffner's direction. (Karl Malden, Michael Bates. DeLuxe Colour, Dimension 150.) Reviewed.

**ROAD TO KATMANDU, THE** (Cinecinta) Promiscuity, drug addiction, flower children, big-game hunting, sacrilege, smuggling, prostitution and murder provide valuable formative experiences for a Parisian malcontent who gets involved in the hippy scene in India. Very like *More*, but more so. (Renaud Verley, Jane Birkin; director, André Cayatte. Eastman Colour.)

**SECRET OF SANTA VITTORIA, THE** (United Artists) The feuding Bombolinis (Anna Magnani, Anthony Quinn) and other inhabitants of an Italian hill town work themselves into a lather about hiding a million bottles of wine from the Germans. Basically a *Whisky Galore* type of anecdote, enlarged and inflated beyond all proportion. (Virna Lisi, Hardy Kruger; director, Stanley Kramer. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**SISTERS, THE** (Cinecinta) Maddeningly pretentious essay in introspection, about two sisters involved in an obscure struggle for psychological domination. Susan Strasberg briefly watchable in between chunks of enigmatic dialogue and stylistic gymnastics. (Nathalie Delon, Massimo Girotti; director, Roberto Malenotti. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

**STILETTO** (Avco Embassy) Slick, meretricious version of another Harold Robbins novel, this time about a jet set racing driver playing hired assassin for the New York Mafia. Cardboard characters crumpled by a script which deals exclusively in clichés. (Alex Cord, Britt Ekland, Joseph Wiseman; director, Bernard Kowalski. Berkey Pathé Colour.)

**STRAWBERRY STATEMENT, THE** (M-G-M) Not really enough to send Louis B. Mayer spinning in his grave, since the boy who finds commitment in the campus revolt is an Andy Hardy type who keeps up his rowing even during the sit-in. Zoom and flash direction all too clearly reveals Stuart Hagmann's background in TV commercials, though there are striking passages. (Bruce Davison, Kim Darby. Metrocolor.) Reviewed.

**TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA** (Warner-Pathé) Leaden horror tale from Hammer, set in a seedily swinging Victorian London. Possibly intended as a demonstration of the evils to which hypocrisy leads, but the schematic plot and anaemic direction merely show that even vampires can be bloodless. (Christopher Lee, Geoffrey Keen, Linda Hayden; director, Peter Sasdy. Technicolor.)

**TIME FOR GIVING, A** (Avco Embassy) Young, with-it couple decide on a do-it-yourself baby delivery, thus disturbing the girl's square, advertising executive father. Too stagebound for comfort, with some over-emphatic performances, although it does have a kind of slightly sickly charm. (David Janssen, Kim Darby, Pete Duel; director, George Schaefer. In Colour.)

**TWO MULES FOR SISTER SARA** (Rank) Mildly entertaining Western, directed by Don Siegel but looking more like one of the lesser spaghetti variety, with Shirley MacLaine in nun's habit helping Clint Eastwood to blow up bridges and rout the wicked French on behalf of revolutionary Mexico. (Manolo Fabregas. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**VIVA MAX!** (Commonwealth United) A demoralised Mexican general recaptures the Alamo, and in trying to evict him the National Guard, U.S. Army, Texan police and a local paramilitary group prove his equals in incompetence. Jerry Paris directs inconspicuously, but the hilarious script and cleverly balanced performances add up to an attractive comedy. (Peter Ustinov, Jonathan Winters, Keenan Wynn. Eastman Colour.)

**WATERMELON MAN** (Columbia) Godfrey Cambridge in good form as a relentlessly extrovert insurance salesman who wakes up one day to find that his skin is indubitably black. A very funny script manages some abrasive jabs at the colour problem, but the direction is appallingly arch. (Estelle Parsons, Howard Caine; director, Melvin Van Peebles. Technicolor.)

**YOJIMBO** (Contemporary) Companion piece to *Sanjuro* and one of Kurosawa's most expert samurai entertainments, with Toshiro Mifune as the run-down warrior who finds himself in a town fought over by two rival gangs. Customary large-scale slaughter and some loving homages to Ford. (Eijiro Tono, Isuzu Yamada. Tohoscope.)

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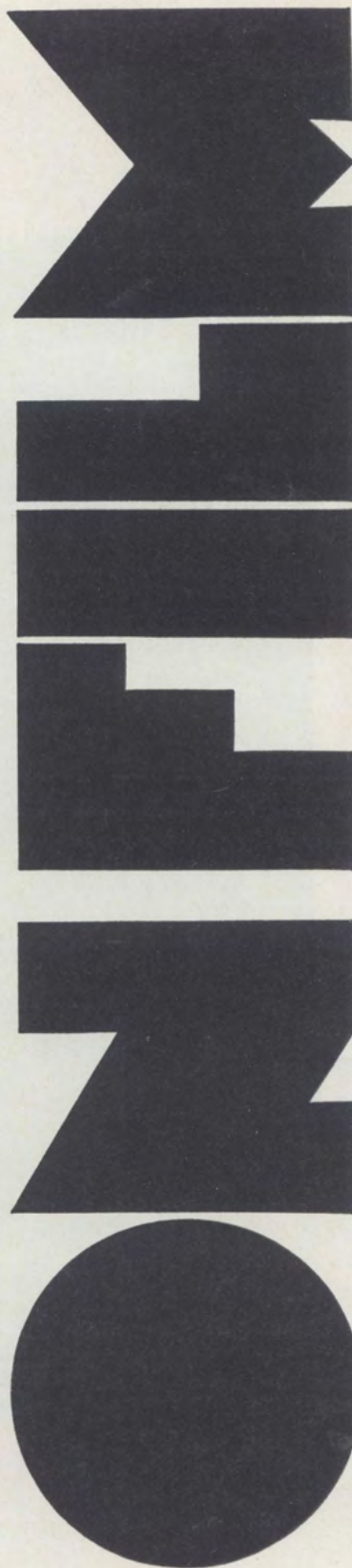
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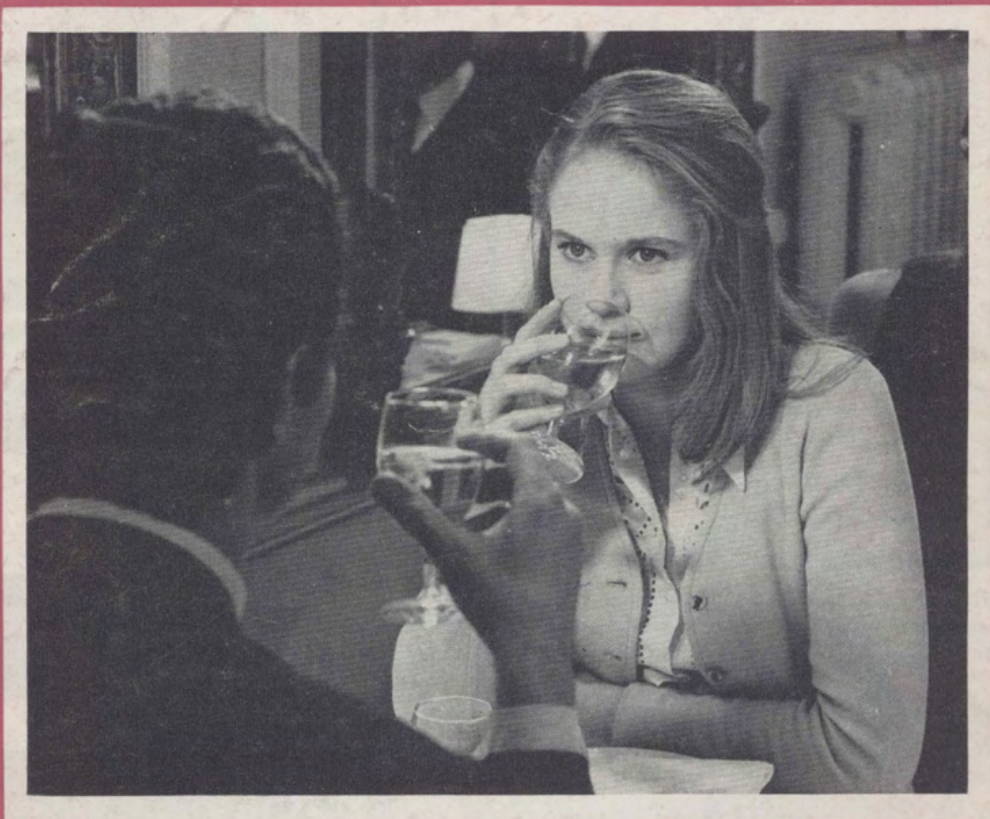
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